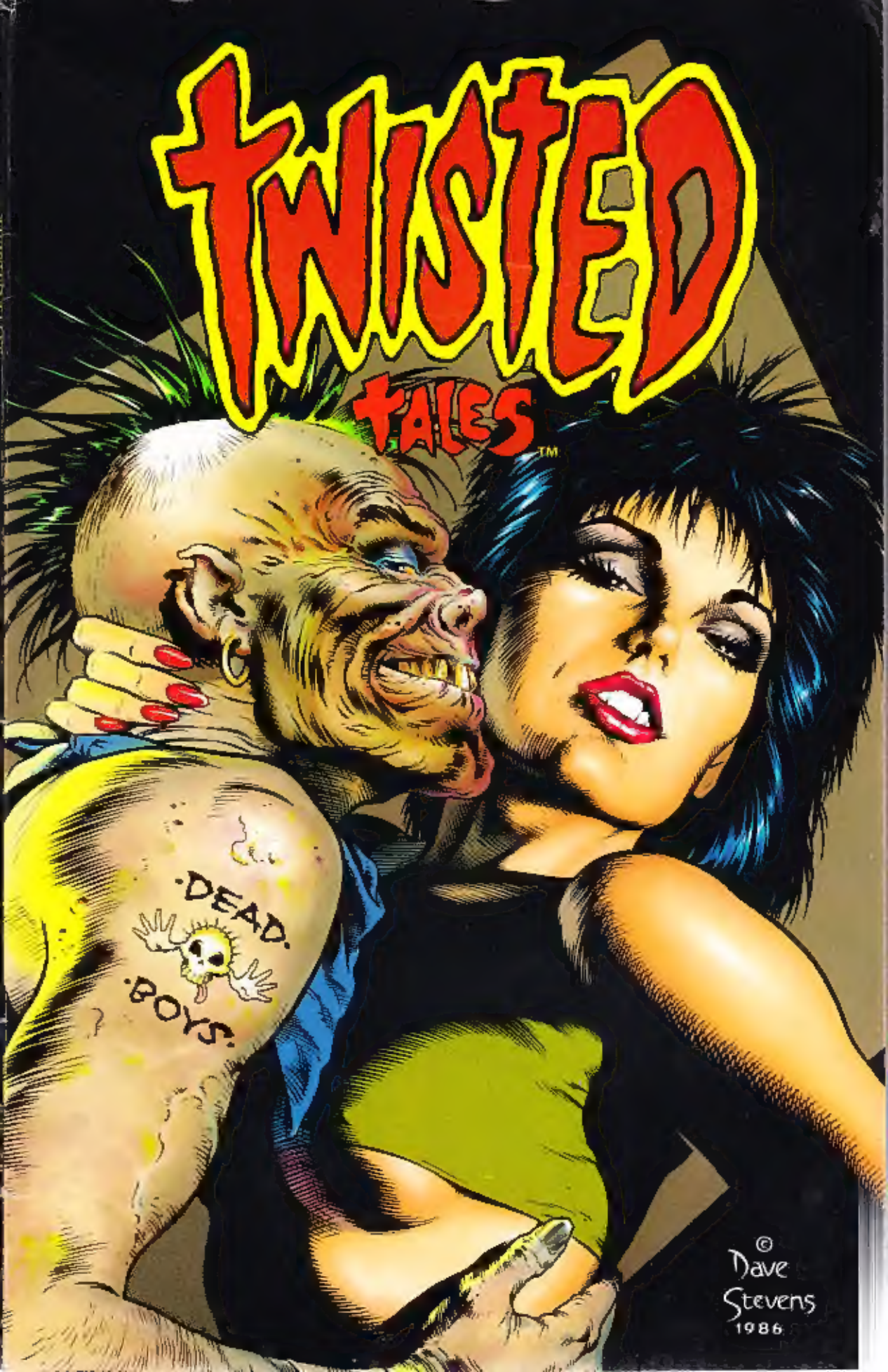
TWISTED
TALES™
DEAD BOYS
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Termites From Mars

Story: Bruce Jones
Pencils: Rick Stasi
Inks: Jim Mooney
Letters: Mike Worley
Colours: Marcus David

Fraternity

Story: Bruce Jones
Art: Scott Saavedra
Letters: Kurt Hathaway
Colours: Barbara Marker

Night Dive

Story: Bruce Jones
Art and Colours: Henry Mayo
Letters: Carrie Spiegle

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"Fraternity" artwork (c) 1987 Scott Saavedra
"Night Dive" artwork (c) 1987 Henry Mayo
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First printing, November 1987

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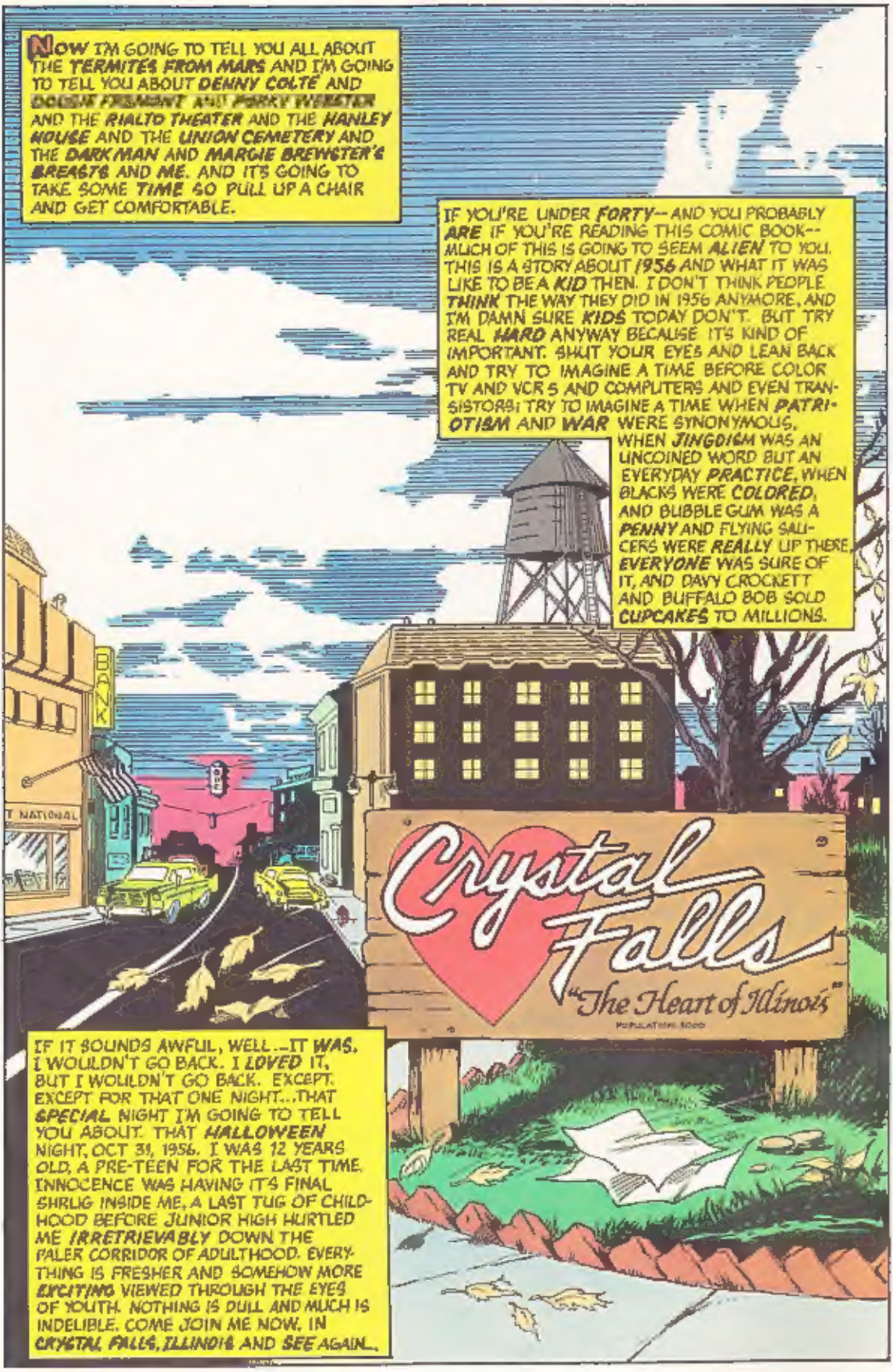

NOW I'M GOING TO TELL YOU ALL ABOUT THE TERMITES FROM MARS AND I'M GOING TO TELL YOU ABOUT DENNY COLT AND [illegible] AND PORKY WEBSTER AND THE RIALTO THEATER AND THE HANLEY HOUSE AND THE UNION CEMETERY AND THE DARK MAN AND MARGIE BREWSTER'S BREASTS AND ME. AND IT'S GOING TO TAKE SOME TIME SO PULL UP A CHAIR AND GET COMFORTABLE.
IF YOU'RE UNDER FORTY--AND YOU PROBABLY ARE IF YOU'RE READING THIS COMIC BOOK--MUCH OF THIS IS GOING TO SEEM ALIEN TO YOU. THIS IS A STORY ABOUT 1956 AND WHAT IT WAS LIKE TO BE A KID THEN. I DON'T THINK PEOPLE THINK THE WAY THEY DID IN 1956 ANYMORE, AND I'M DAMN SURE KIDS TODAY DON'T. BUT TRY REAL HARD ANYWAY BECAUSE IT'S KIND OF IMPORTANT. SHUT YOUR EYES AND LEAN BACK AND TRY TO IMAGINE A TIME BEFORE COLOR TV AND VCR'S AND COMPUTERS AND EVEN TRANSISTORS; TRY TO IMAGINE A TIME WHEN PATRIOTISM AND WAR WERE SYNONYMOUS, WHEN JINGOISM WAS AN UNCOINED WORD BUT AN EVERYDAY PRACTICE, WHEN BLACKS WERE COLORED, AND BUBBLE GUM WAS A PENNY AND FLYING SAUCERS WERE REALLY UP THERE, EVERYONE WAS SURE OF IT, AND DAVY CROCKETT AND BUFFALO BOB SOLD CUPCAKES TO MILLIONS.
Crystal Falls
"The Heart of Illinois"
IF IT SOUNDS AWFUL, WELL--IT WAS. I WOULDN'T GO BACK. I LOVED IT, BUT I WOULDN'T GO BACK. EXCEPT. EXCEPT FOR THAT ONE NIGHT...THAT SPECIAL NIGHT I'M GOING TO TELL YOU ABOUT. THAT HALLOWEEN NIGHT, OCT 31, 1956. I WAS 12 YEARS OLD, A PRE-TEEN FOR THE LAST TIME. INNOCENCE WAS HAVING IT'S FINAL SHRUG INSIDE ME, A LAST TUG OF CHILDHOOD BEFORE JUNIOR HIGH HURTLED ME IRRETRIEVABLY DOWN THE PALER CORRIDOR OF ADULTHOOD. EVERYTHING IS FRESHER AND SOMEHOW MORE EXCITING VIEWED THROUGH THE EYES OF YOUTH. NOTHING IS DULL AND MUCH IS INDELIBLE. COME JOIN ME NOW, IN CRYSTAL FALLS, ILLINOIS AND SEE AGAIN.

WHAT CAN I SAY ABOUT FRIDAY NIGHT? IT WAS JUST THE ***BEST*** NIGHT IN THE WORLD, THAT'S ALL, ESPECIALLY DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR. HOMEWORK? ***FORGET IT!*** SUNDAY EVENING WAS SOON ENOUGH. FOR NOW, THERE'S THE WHOLE WEEKEND TO LOOK FORWARD TO--AND ***HALLOWEEN*** WEEKEND AT THAT! SCHOOL'S ***OUT***, MAN. IT'S ***OUT!***

THE RITUAL IS THE SAME; BEAT IT FROM THE SCHOOL YARD BEFORE THE BELL'S THROUGH RINGING, HOP ON OUR TRUSTY *SCHWINN*S AND POWER BLAST INTO THE DARK NEBULAE, SHRIEKING OUR HERO'S NAME...

TOM CORBETT! SPA-A-A-A-A-ACE CADET!

FIRST STOP: ***MARCY'S MARKET.*** FREMONT WANTS HIS ***THREE MUSKETEERS.*** COLTE A PACKET OR TWO OF ***LICK-M-ADE,*** THE PORKER A ***DOUBLE CHERRY PHOSPHATE,*** AND ME--I'M STILL LOOKING FOR ***"SPACEMEN"*** GUM CARD #20--***"CRASH LANDING IN A MERCURIAN BOG..."***

DOUG FREMONT WAS PROBABLY MY BEST FRIEND AND THE ONLY ONE WHO EVEN ***VAGUELY*** SHARED MY PASSION FOR ***"SPACEMEN"*** GUM CARDS...

SO WHAD YA GET, BRIAN?

"CAPTURED BY SPACE PIRATES," AGAIN! *CRIPES*, I'VE ALREADY GOT ***SIX*** OF THESE! I COULD START MY ***OWN*** GUM CARD COMPANY!

HEY, WHERE'S THE ***SPIRIT***? HE'S ALWAYS DOWNIN' HIS ***SIXTH*** PACK OF LICK-M-ADE BY NOW...

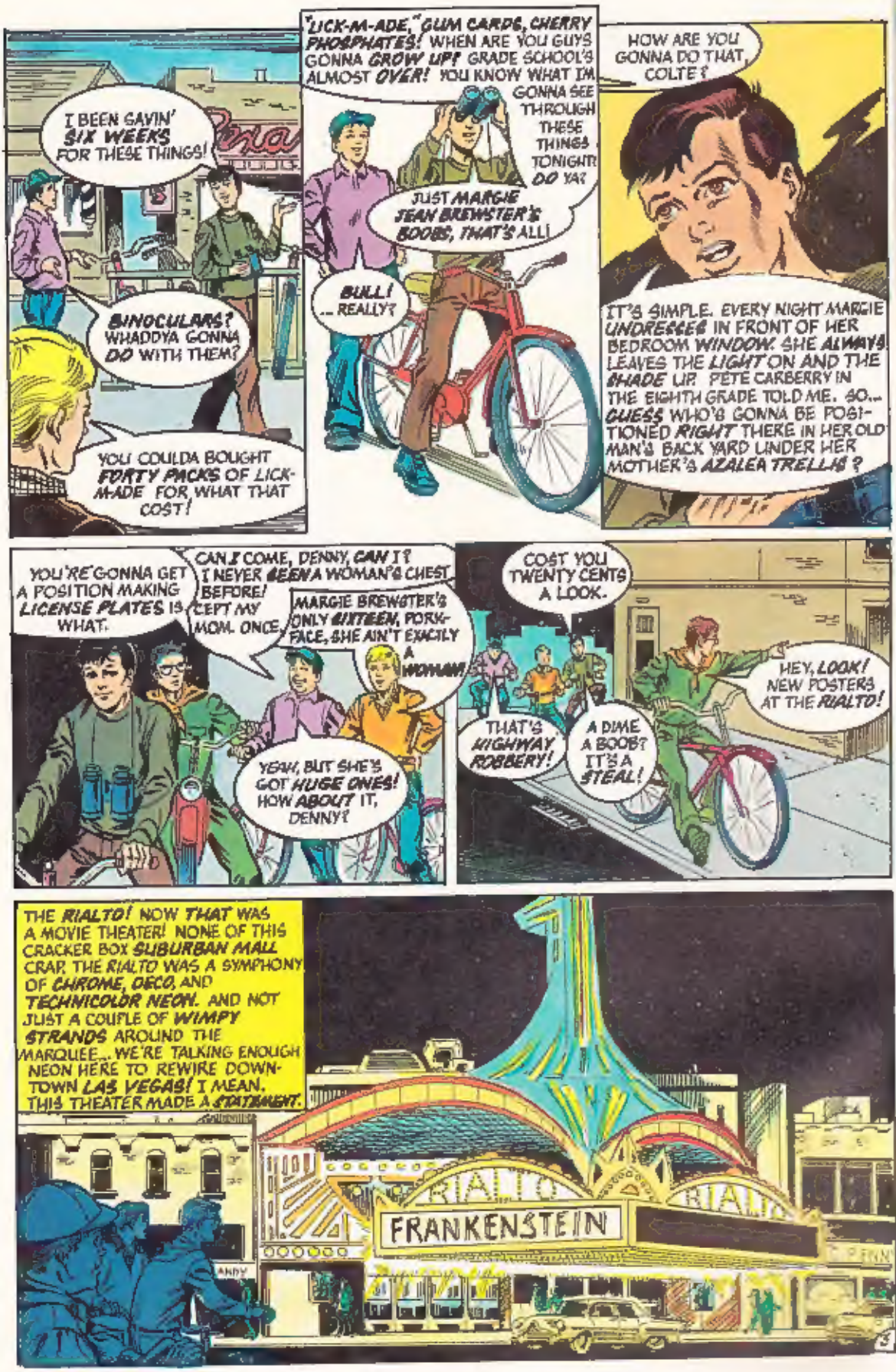
THERE HE IS... WHAT'S HE BUYIN?

WE CALLED DENNY ***"THE SPIRIT,"*** BECAUSE HIS NAME WAS THE SAME AS THE COMIC BOOK CRIMEFIGHTER. EVERY HALLOWEEN--EXCEPT ***THIS*** ONE--HE WORE THE ***SAME*** COSTUME! HIS FATHER'S ***HAT*** AND ***TAN TOP COAT*** AND A ***BLACK DOMINO MASK.*** NOBODY ELSE EVER KNEW WHO HE WAS SUPPOSED TO BE, BUT DENNY DIDN'T MIND... ***HE*** KNEW HE WAS ***"THE SPIRIT..."***

HEY COLTE, WHAT YA GOT?

Special ONE-A-DAY VITAMINS

99


I BEEN GAVIN' SIX WEEKS FOR THESE THINGS!
BINOCULARS? WHADDYA GONNA DO WITH THEM?
YOU COULDA BOUGHT FORTY PACKS OF LICK-M-ADE FOR WHAT THAT COST!
"LICK-M-ADE," GUM CARDS, CHERRY PHOSPHATES! WHEN ARE YOU GUYS GONNA GROW UP? GRADE SCHOOL'S ALMOST OVER! YOU KNOW WHAT I'M GONNA SEE THROUGH THESE THINGS TONIGHT? DO YA?
JUST MARGIE JEAN BREWSTER'S BOOBS, THAT'S ALL!
BULL! ... REALLY?
HOW ARE YOU GONNA DO THAT, COLTE?
IT'S SIMPLE. EVERY NIGHT MARGIE UNDRESSES IN FRONT OF HER BEDROOM WINDOW. SHE ALWAYS LEAVES THE LIGHT ON AND THE SHADE UP. PETE CARBERRY IN THE EIGHTH GRADE TOLD ME. SO... GUESS WHO'S GONNA BE POSITIONED RIGHT THERE IN HER OLD MAN'S BACK YARD UNDER HER MOTHER'S AZALEA TRELLIS?
YOU'RE GONNA GET A POSITION MAKING LICENSE PLATES IS WHAT.
CAN I COME, DENNY, CAN I? I NEVER SEEN A WOMAN'S CHEST BEFORE! EXCEPT MY MOM. ONCE.
MARGIE BREWSTER'S ONLY SIXTEEN, PORK-FACE, SHE AIN'T EXACTLY A WOMAN!
YEAH, BUT SHE'S GOT HUGE ONES! HOW ABOUT IT, DENNY?
COST YOU TWENTY CENTS A LOOK.
THAT'S HIGHWAY ROBBERY!
A DIME A BOOB? IT'S A STEAL!
HEY, LOOK! NEW POSTERS AT THE RIALTO!
THE RIALTO! NOW THAT WAS A MOVIE THEATER! NONE OF THIS CRACKER BOX SUBURBAN MALL CRAP. THE RIALTO WAS A SYMPHONY OF CHROME, DECO, AND TECHNICOLOR NEON. AND NOT JUST A COUPLE OF WIMPY STRANDS AROUND THE MARQUEE... WE'RE TALKING ENOUGH NEON HERE TO REWIRE DOWNTOWN LAS VEGAS! I MEAN, THIS THEATER MADE A STATEMENT.
RIALTO
FRANKENSTEIN
RIALTO
ANDY

IN 1956--IN CRYSTAL FALLS, ANYWAY--"FRANKENSTEIN" HADN'T MADE IT TO LATE NIGHT TV YET. NONE OF US HAD EVER SEEN THE CLASSIC BORIS KARLOFF THRILLER, BUT WE'D SEEN THE MARY SHELLEY NOVEL AT THE SCHOOL LIBRARY...

FRANKENSTEIN

LOOKS PRETTY BORING TO ME.

YEAH, THE BOOK WAS SURE BORING, I CAN TELL YOU THAT.

I SEEN "THE CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON" IN 3-D. NOW, THAT WAS A SCARY PICTURE!

YEAH, OR "INVADERS FROM MARS"...

--OR "MEGA OF LOST WOMEN!"

HEY, WAIT A MINUTE! WHAT'S THIS--A DOUBLE FEATURE?

WOW!

"TERMITES FROM MARS?"

NEVER HEARD OF IT...

LOOKS NEAT!

AND IT DID LOOK NEAT! IT LOOKED EVEN NEATER THAN JAMES WHITMORE IN "THEM!" AND THAT WAS JUST ABOUT AS NEAT AS YOU COULD GET! RIGHT THEN AND THERE I KNEW WHERE I WAS GOING TO BE TONIGHT!

Also Featuring

TERMITES from MARS!

GEE...

OKAY, IT'S SETTLED! SEE YOU GUYS AT SEVEN SHARP! TOMMMMMM CORBETT!--

--SPAAAAACE CA-DET!

I WAS ABOUT HALF WAY HOME, PEDDLING SERENELY DOWN MAPLE DRIVE, WHEN I SAW HIM FOR THE FIRST TIME THAT NIGHT...A SHADOW-CLOAKED FIGURE STANDING BENEATH A BIG MAPLE TREE IN A LONG COAT AND FLOPPY HAT. HE WAS ALL ALONE AND, MAYBE IT WAS A TRICK OF THE FADING LIGHT, BUT HE SEEMED TO BE STARING AT ME. THE DARK MAN...

BUT I DIDN'T HAVE TIME TO THINK ABOUT MYSTERIOUS FIGURES JUST THEN; I LEAPT FROM MY TRUSTY STEED AND HIT THE FRONT DOOR *RUNNING*. FOR REASONS THAT ELUDE ME NOW, IT WAS IMPORTANT TO HIT JUST ABOUT *EVERY* DOOR *EVERYWHERE* RUNNING IN THOSE DAYS--EVEN IF YOUR LITTLE *BROTHER* WAS STANDING ON THE OTHER SIDE...

WHAM!

BRIAN, KIN I BORROW YOUR *CATCHER'S MITT*?

NO.

BRIAN, DON'T RUN IN THE HOUSE, DEAR.

RIGHT, MOM.

ALL I KNOW IS, IT FELT *GOOD* TO RUN, AND I *NEVER* SEEMED OUT OF BREATH. ESPECIALLY WHEN "*X-MINUS ONE*" WAS WAITING ON THE RADIO...

SNAP!

"COUNTDOWN TO BLASTOFF... X-MINUS 5... X-MINUS 4..."

IF THERE'S *ANYTHING* ON EARTH TO EQUAL THE SIMPLE PLEASURE OF LISTENING TO "*X-MINUS ONE*" BEFORE SUPPER AND FINISHING A *REVELLE* PLASTIC MODEL OF A *CURTISS P-40*, I'D LIKE TO KNOW WHAT IT IS...

"...THESE ARE STORIES OF THE FUTURE--ADVENTURES IN WHICH YOU'LL LIVE IN A MILLION COULD-BE YEARS ON A THOUSAND MAYBE WORLDS..."

STEVENSON WILL WIN.

EISENHOWER.

STEVENSON; PEOPLE ARE *SICK* OF THE REPUBLICAN PARTY.

EISENHOWER; HE'S GOT THAT SMILE *HELEN KELLER* LOVES.

STEVENSON'S A *GENIUS*.

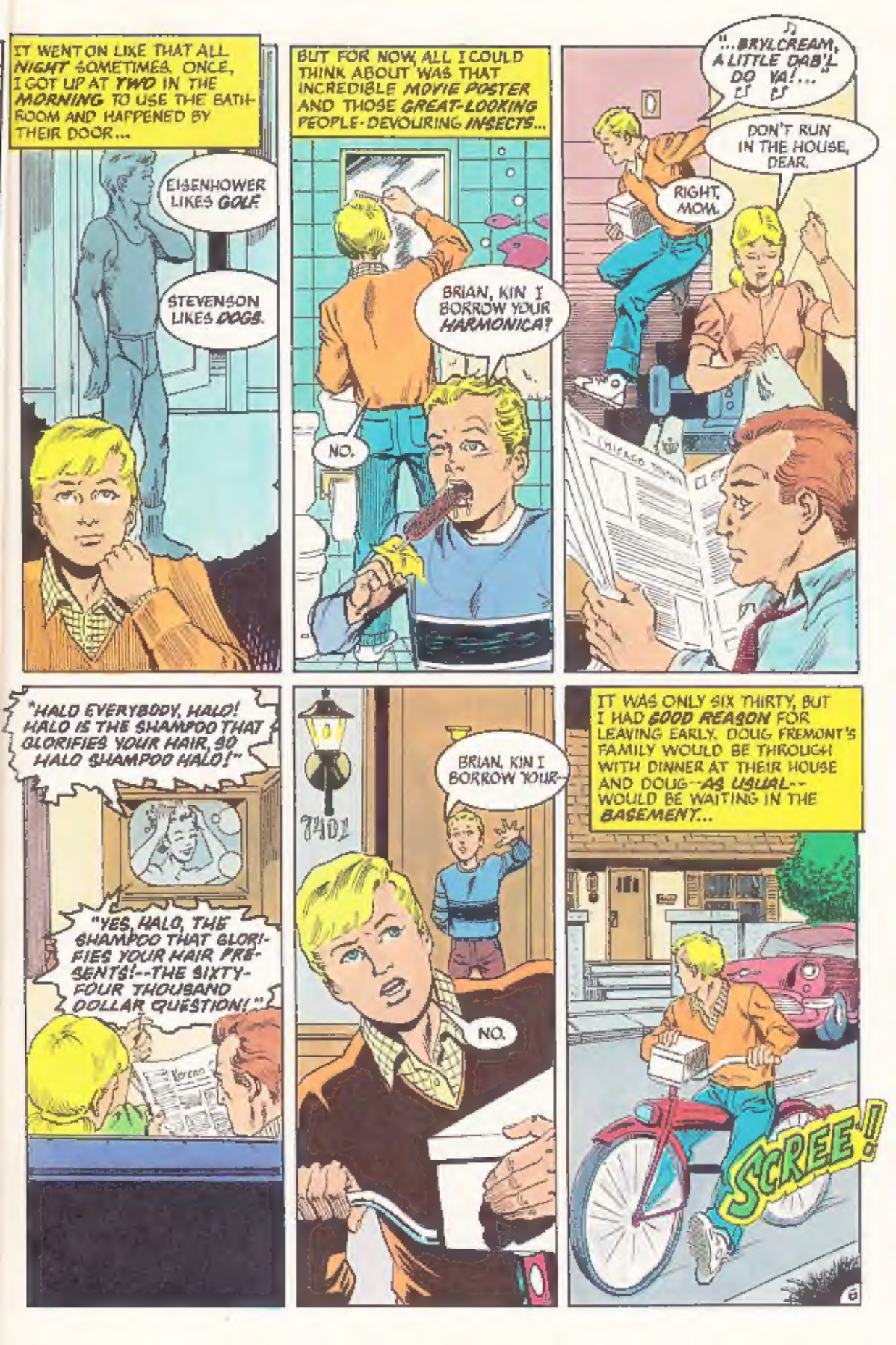
EISENHOWER'S A *WAR HERO*.

EISENHOWER'S *WISHY-WASHY*. STEVENSON.

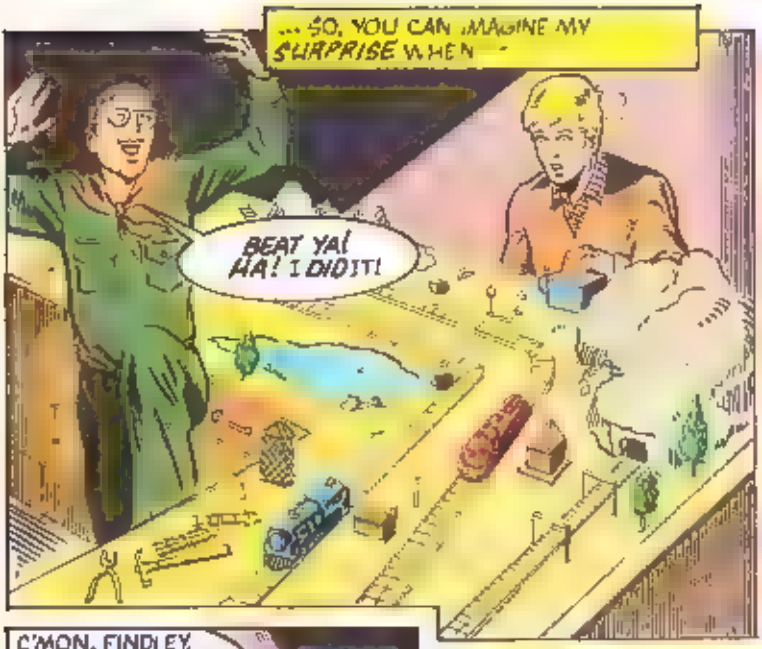
IKE.

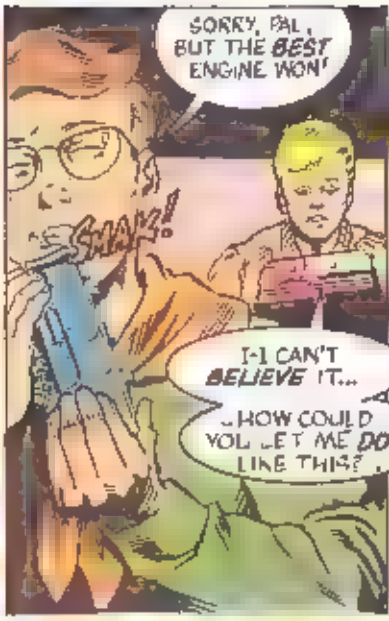
ADLAI.

IKE.

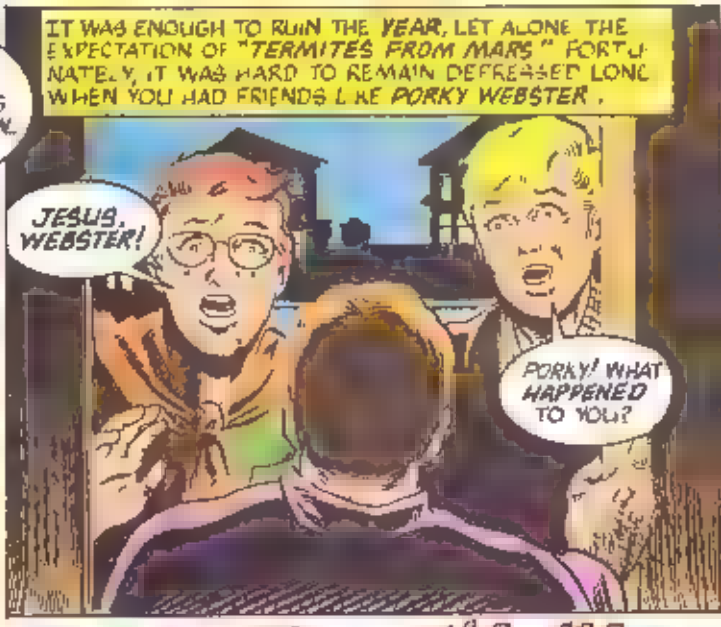

IT WENT ON LIKE THAT ALL NIGHT SOMETIMES. ONCE, I GOT UP AT TWO IN THE MORNING TO USE THE BATHROOM AND HAPPENED BY THEIR DOOR...
EISENHOWER LIKES GOLF.
STEVENSON LIKES DOGS.
BUT FOR NOW, ALL I COULD THINK ABOUT WAS THAT INCREDIBLE MOVIE POSTER AND THOSE GREAT-LOOKING PEOPLE-DEVOURING INSECTS...
BRIAN, KIN I BORROW YOUR HARMONICA?
NO.
"...BRYLCREAM, A LITTLE DAB'LL DO YA!..."
DON'T RUN IN THE HOUSE, DEAR.
RIGHT, MOM.
"HALO EVERYBODY, HALO! HALO IS THE SHAMPOO THAT GLORIFIES YOUR HAIR, SO HALO SHAMPOO HALO!"
"YES, HALO, THE SHAMPOO THAT GLORIFIES YOUR HAIR PRESENTS!--THE SIXTY-FOUR THOUSAND DOLLAR QUESTION!"
BRIAN, KIN I BORROW YOUR--
NO.
IT WAS ONLY SIX THIRTY, BUT I HAD GOOD REASON FOR LEAVING EARLY. DOUG FREMONT'S FAMILY WOULD BE THROUGH WITH DINNER AT THEIR HOUSE AND DOUG--AS USUAL--WOULD BE WAITING IN THE BASEMENT...
SCREE!

DON'T RUN IN THE HOUSE, BRIAN DEAR.
RIGHT, MRS. FREMONT.
SEE, WE BOTH HAD LIONEL TRAINS--DIDN'T EVERYONE? MINE WAS A SANTA FE SUPER CHIEF, DOUG'S WAS A BERKSHIRE. MY FOLKS WOULDN'T ALLOW A PERMANENT LAYOUT IN OUR BASEMENT... BUT DOUG'S BASEMENT... DOUG'S BASEMENT...
...DOUG'S BASEMENT WAS, WELL... HEAVEN...
READY?
READY.
WE HAD RACED THE SAME CROSSING SIXTEEN TIMES--- SIXTEEN TIMES MY SANTA FE HAD BEATEN HIS BERKSHIRE, AND STILL DOUG WASN'T CONVINCED...
ON YER MARK,
GET SET--
NOTHING COULD BEAT MY SUPER CHIEF, ESPECIALLY A CLUNKY, OLD FASHIONED STEAMER LIKE DOUGIE'S BERKSHIRE...
GO!
7


... SO, YOU CAN IMAGINE MY SURPRISE WHEN —
BEAT YA! HA! I DID IT!

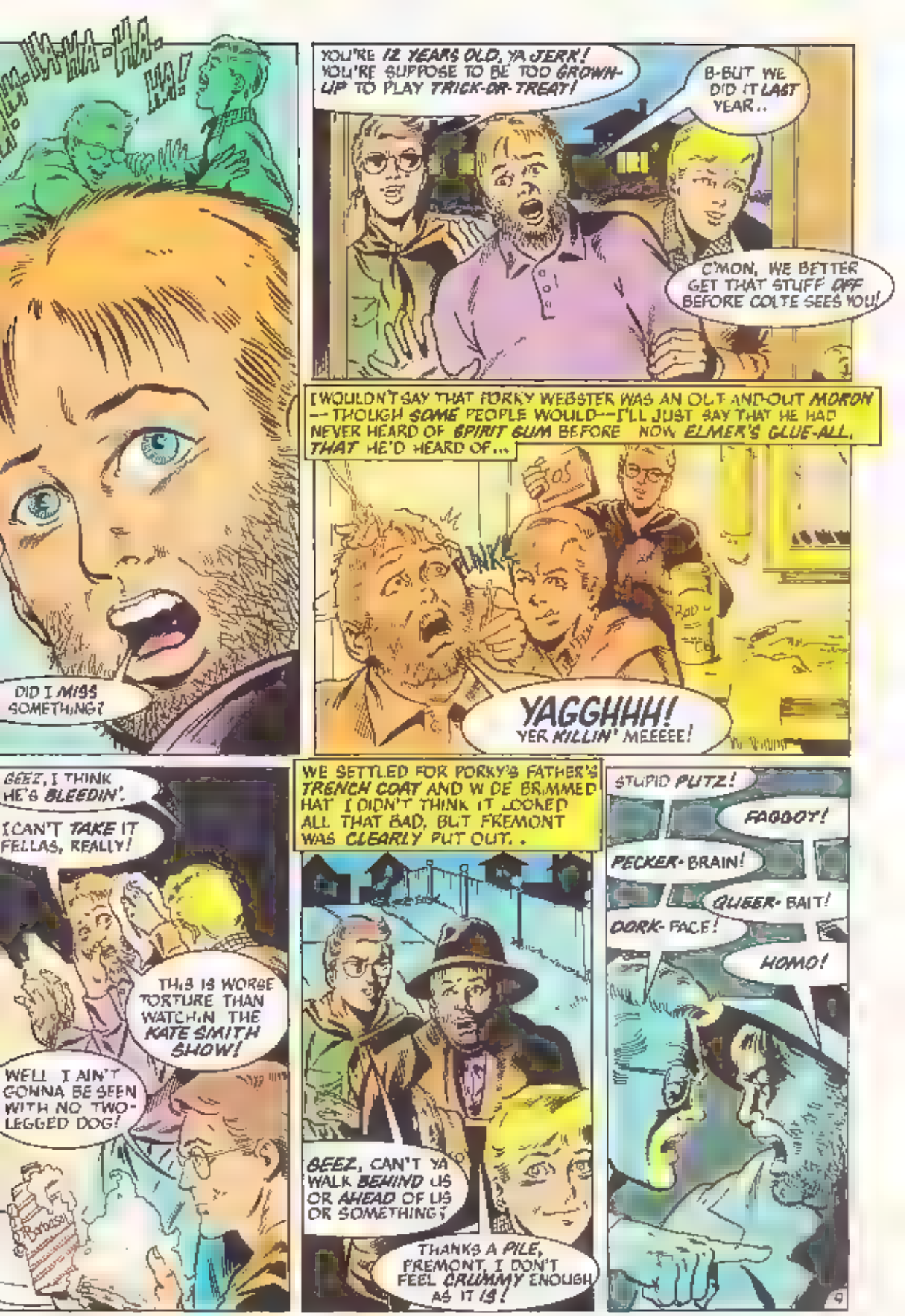

SORRY, PAL, BUT THE BEST ENGINE WON!
SNAP!
I-I CAN'T BELIEVE IT...
...HOW COULD YOU LET ME DO LIKE THIS?

C'MON, FINDLEY, WE'LL BE LATE FOR THE MOVIE!
...JUST CAN'T BELIEVE IT... MAYBE THE WHEELS NEED LUBRICATION.


IT WAS ENOUGH TO RUIN THE YEAR, LET ALONE THE EXPECTATION OF "TERMITES FROM MARS." FORTUNATELY, IT WAS HARD TO REMAIN DEPRESSED LONG WHEN YOU HAD FRIENDS LIKE PORKY WEBSTER.
JESUS, WEBSTER!
PORKY! WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?

I'M A WEREWOLF!
HEY, WHERE'S YOU GUYS' COSTUMES?

HA-HA-HA-HA-HA-HA-HA-HA


M-M-M-M!
DID I MISS SOMETHING?
YOU'RE 12 YEARS OLD, YA JERK! YOU'RE SUPPOSE TO BE TOO GROWN-UP TO PLAY TRICK-OR-TREAT!
B-BUT WE DID IT LAST YEAR..
C'MON, WE BETTER GET THAT STUFF OFF BEFORE COLTE SEES YOU!
I WOULDN'T SAY THAT PORKY WEBSTER WAS AN OUT AND-OUT MORON --THOUGH SOME PEOPLE WOULD--I'LL JUST SAY THAT HE HAD NEVER HEARD OF SPIRIT GUM BEFORE NOW. ELMER'S GLUE-ALL, THAT HE'D HEARD OF...
PLNK!
YAGGHHH! YER KILLIN' MEEEEE!
GEEZ, I THINK HE'S BLEEDIN'.
I CAN'T TAKE IT FELLAS, REALLY!
THIS IS WORSE TORTURE THAN WATCHIN THE KATE SMITH SHOW!
WELL I AIN'T GONNA BE SEEN WITH NO TWO-LEGGED DOG!
WE SETTLED FOR PORKY'S FATHER'S TRENCH COAT AND W DE BRIMMED HAT I DIDN'T THINK IT LOOKED ALL THAT BAD, BUT FREMONT WAS CLEARLY PUT OUT. .
GEEZ, CAN'T YA WALK BEHIND US OR AHEAD OF US OR SOMETHING?
THANKS A PILE, FREMONT, I DON'T FEEL CRUMMY ENOUGH AS IT IS!
STUPID PUTZ!
FAGGOT!
PECKER-BRAIN!
QUEER-BAIT!
DORK-FACE!
HOMO!

FREMONT AND WEBSTER WERE ACTUALLY *GOOD* FRIENDS BUT THEY HAILED FROM DECIDEDLY *DIFFERENT* SCHOOLS OF VERBAL ABUSE! PORKY BELIEVED THAT *GAY EUPHEMISMS* WERE THE BEST SOURCE OF PERSONAL DEBASEMENT, WHILE DOUG FAVORED CERTAIN PORTIONS OF THE MALE *ANATOMY*

COOL IT, THERE'S *MARGIE BREWSTER'S* HOUSE!

COLTE WAS IN THE BUSHES BELOW MARGIE'S *WINDOW* JUST LIKE HE *SAID* HE'D BE. WE MADE THE MISTAKE OF LETTING *PORKY* GIVE THE FIRST GREETING — "*WEREWOLF*" FOR AND ALL.

HEY, COLTE!

YAAGGHHHHHH!

JUMPIN' JESUS, WHAT THE HELL ARE *YOU* SUPPOSE TO BE, A WALKING *ARM PIT*?

HE'S A *WEREWOLF*. I SEEN MARGIE'S *BOOBS* YET, SPIRIT?

NO, BUT I'M EXPECTING TO *IN-E-MINUTE*! SO JUST COUGH UP YER *CHANGE*, BOYS, IF YOU INTEND TO OGLE THEM *MELONS*!

I GET THE *FIRST* LOOK!

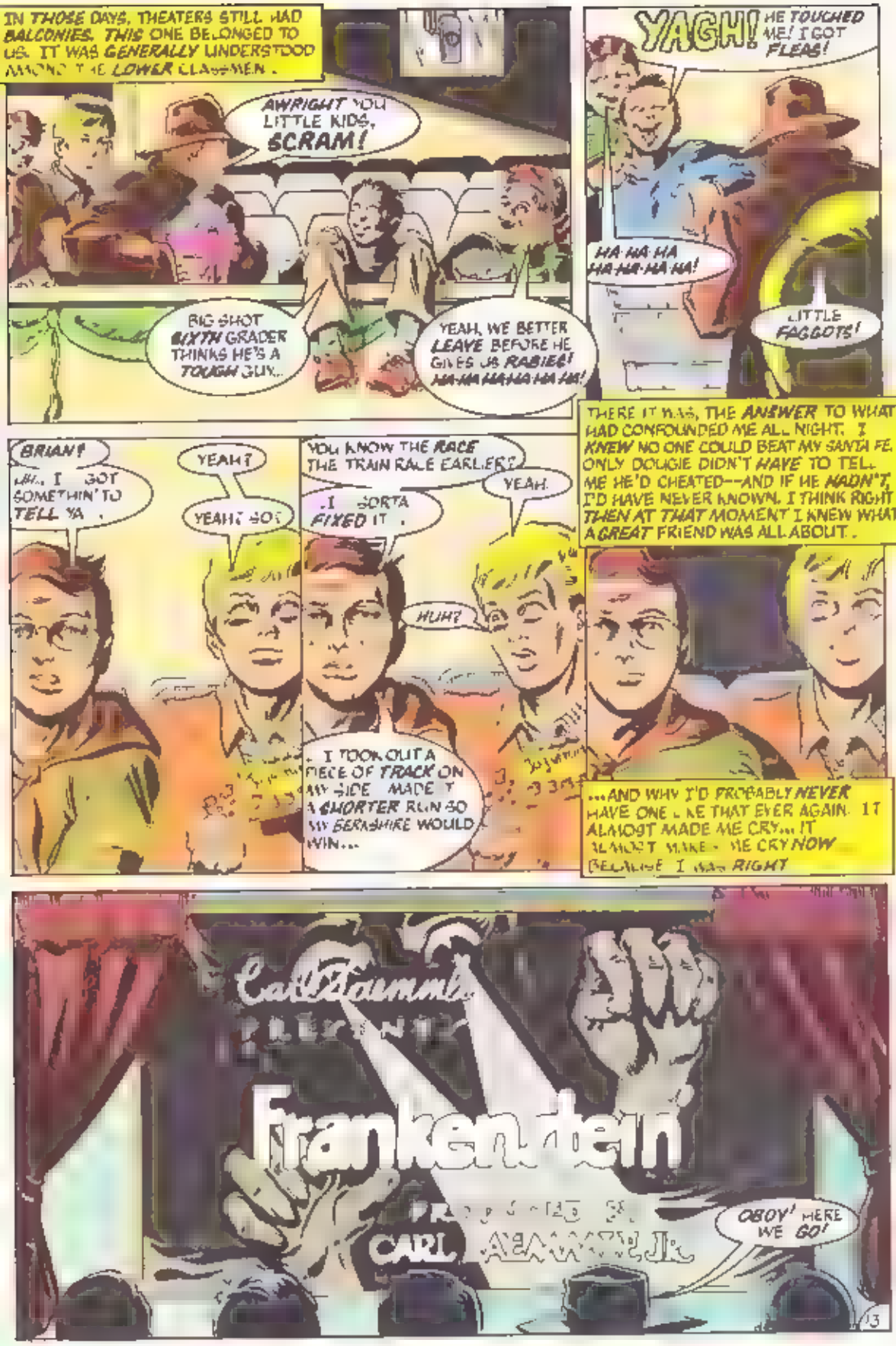
YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND THAT MARGIE BREWSTER'S *BREASTS* WERE A KIND OF *LEGEND* IN CRYSTAL FALLS — AMONG PREPUBESCENT *MALES*, ANYWAY. THEY WEREN'T JUST *BIG* — THEY WERE *MONUMENTAL*. LIKE SUMMER *THUNDERHEADS* ROLLING IN FROM THE WEST AS SHE WALKED TO SCHOOL EACH MORNING...

LYLE BUTNER CLAIMED HE'D ACTUALLY *SEEN* THEM ONE DAY IN ALL THEIR NAKED GLORY WHILE CUTTING THROUGH *BUTTER'S FIELD*. MARGIE AND HER BREASTS WERE APPARENTLY HAVING A DIP IN *CRYSTAL LAKE*. LYLE HAD DESCRIBED THEM IN DETAIL TO COLTE, AND DENNY HAD RELATED THIS *IN-DEPTH STUDY* COUNTLESS TIMES TO US

— AND THEY SORT OF *QUIVERED* THERE IN THE SUNLIGHT AS SHE BREATHED THE LAKE WATER *GLISTENING* ON THEIR *DILATED WHITENESS*

"DILATED WHITENESS". WHERE DID HE GET STUFF LIKE THAT? WE SAT THERE DOGGEDLY, AS THE MINUTES DRAGGED BY, WAITING FOR SOME SIGN OF LIFE IN THE SANCTIFIED UPSTAIRS WINDOW..
I'M GETTIN COLD...
THIS GROUND'S FREEZIN!
WE GAVE IT ANOTHER TEN MINUTES, THEN CREPT AROUND TO THE LIVING ROOM WINDOW. A BLUE RECTANGLE FLICKERED FROM WITHIN.
CRIPES, SHE'S WATCHIN' WAGON TRAIN! THAT GOES ON FOREVER!
MY BUTT'S FROZEN!
MUST BE AGONIZIN' WITH ALL YER BUTT!
WE LEFT COLTE AMONG THE AZALEAS. AT THAT POINT IN MY LIFE INSECTS FROM OTHER PLANETS TOOK DECIDED PRECEDENCE OVER THE FEMALE FORM. DOUG, PORKY, AND I WENT OFF TO PAY THE PORKER'S POP A VISIT...
IT TOOK US ABOUT TEN MINUTES CUTTING THROUGH BACK YARDS AND THROUGH BUTTER'S FIELD. AND THEN, ALL AT ONCE, THERE WE WERE, AND THERE WAS THE CEMETERY. AND THE HOUSE ON THE HILL
HIYA, POP!
PORKY HAD NEVER KNOWN HIS REAL DAD, HE'D DIED BEFORE PORKY WAS BORN. AND, ACCORDING TO THE PORKER, HIS MOTHER CHANGED THE SUBJECT EVERY TIME MR. WEBSTER'S NAME WAS BROUGHT UP. HE WAS A TOTAL ENIGMA TO US. BUT PORKY WAS CONVINCED HE'D BEEN A GREAT GUY... AND, SINCE NO ONE WOULD TELL HIM HIS FATHER'S HISTORY, PORKY JUST MADE ONE UP...
BEST PILOT IN THE WHOLE NAVY, MY DAD WAS.
...WIPED OUT AN ENTIRE JAPANESE ARMADA, MY OLD MAN DID. MY MOM TOLD ME...
11

AND BEFORE WE LEFT, WE ALWAYS HAD TO PICK UP A COUPLE OF ROCKS AND PAY OUR RESPECTS TO THE HANLEY HOUSE ON THE HILL, SQUATTING THERE LIKE A MALIGNANT TOAD... DEEP, DARK, AND TERRIBLY SILENT
GIVE BACK MY KNIFE, YA' OLD COOT!
HE HAD CHASED US ONCE THREE YEARS AGO. OLD MAN HANLEY HAD, AND RETRIEVED A PEARL HANDLED JACK KNIFE FALLEN FROM MY POCKET. NO ONE HAD SEEN OR HEARD OF HIM SINCE THAT NIGHT AND NO LIGHTS SHOWED IN THE BROODING, HEAVILY DRAPED WINDOWS. MANY BELIEVE HIM DEAD, ROTTING AWAY IN SOME UPSTAIRS ROOM...
BEST DARN KNIFE I EVER HAD, AND THAT OL' CREEP HAS IT!
MANY BELIEVED THAT HANLEY'S DEAD SPIRIT WALKED THE EMPTY HALLS AND ROAMED THE HIDDEN PASSAGEWAYS RUMORED TO BE THERE BUT ONE THING EVERYONE AGREED ON: ALIVE OR GHOST, HANLEY HAD BEEN RICH. THERE WAS GOOD REASON TO BELIEVE THAT MOST OF THOSE RICHES RESIDED SOMEWHERE WITHIN THAT HULKING TOMB HE'D CALLED HOME
...BUT NONE OF US DARED GO NEAR IT
I LOOKED BACK ONE MORE TIME AS WE LEFT THE WOODS AND THAT'S WHEN I SAW HIM AGAIN--THE MYSTERIOUS SHADOWED FIGURE STALKING AMONG THE TREES... THE DARK MAN. HANLEY'S SPIRIT? I DIDN'T KNOW AND I DIDN'T TELL THE OTHERS-- IT WOULD HAVE PARALYZED PORKY AND KILLED THE EVENING...
I PUSHED THE DARKMAN FROM MY MIND. AFTER ALL, THE RIALTO WAS BUZZING! TWO HALLOWEEN FEATURES! BUTTERED POPCORN, JUJUFRUITS, SLOW POKES, AND MILK DUDS! WHO COULD POSSIBLY ASK FOR MORE? CERTAINLY NOT US
THAT YOU, WEBSTER?
HA-HA-HA-HA-HA-HA!
MAYBE WE SHOULD PUT YOUR POPCORN IN A DOGGY BAG!!
JUST GIVE ME MY TICKET, HUH?
HEY, WEBSTER, DON'T LET YOUR LEG ON ANY THEATER SEATS! HA-HA-HA-HA-HA-HA-HA!
YEAH, YEAH, REAL CUTE.
12


IN THOSE DAYS, THEATERS STILL HAD BALCONIES. THIS ONE BELONGED TO US. IT WAS GENERALLY UNDERSTOOD AMONG THE LOWER CLASSMEN.
AWRIGHT YOU LITTLE KIDS, SCRAM!
BIG SHOT SIXTH GRADER THINKS HE'S A TOUGH GUY...
YEAH, WE BETTER LEAVE BEFORE HE GIVES US RABIES! HA-HA HA-HA HA HA!
YAGH! HE TOUCHED ME! I GOT FLEAS!
HA-HA-HA HA-HA-HA-HA!
LITTLE FAGGOTS!
BRIAN!
UH... I GOT SOMETHIN' TO TELL YA.
YEAH?
YEAH? SO?
YOU KNOW THE RACE THE TRAIN RACE EARLIER?
YEAH.
I SORTA FIXED IT.
HUH?
I TOOK OUT A PIECE OF TRACK ON MY SIDE MADE IT A SHORTER RUN SO MY BERKSHIRE WOULD WIN...
THERE IT WAS, THE ANSWER TO WHAT HAD CONFOUNDED ME ALL NIGHT. I KNEW NO ONE COULD BEAT MY SANTA FE. ONLY DOUGIE DIDN'T HAVE TO TELL ME HE'D CHEATED--AND IF HE HADN'T, I'D HAVE NEVER KNOWN. I THINK RIGHT THEN AT THAT MOMENT I KNEW WHAT A GREAT FRIEND WAS ALL ABOUT.
...AND WHY I'D PROBABLY NEVER HAVE ONE LIKE THAT EVER AGAIN. IT ALMOST MADE ME CRY... IT ALMOST MAKES ME CRY NOW BECAUSE I WAS RIGHT
Carl Traumm
PRESENTS
Frankenstein
CARL
OBOY! HERE WE GO!

NOW THERE WERE A *LOT* OF HORROR MOVIES MADE IN THE 1950's AND PORKY WEBSTER WAS AN *EXPERT* ON THEM ALL. HE COULD DESCRIBE IN *VIVID DETAIL* EVERY GORY *SCENE* FROM EVERY FILM FROM "*THE THING*" TO "*TARANTULA.*" IF IT WAS A *WEIRD* FLICK, PORKY KNEW IT FRAME BY FRAME ..

...WHAT I KNOW NOW, BUT *DIDN'T* KNOW THEN, WAS THAT PORKY WAS A *MASTER* OF *DECEIT*; HE HAD GLEANED *MOST* OF THIS VAST CINEMATIC KNOWLEDGE FROM *CHESTER WHITING* OF THE FIFTH GRADE. CHESTER WAS A VERITABLE *WALKING ENCYCLOPEDIA* OF THE THEATER OF THE MACABRE.

...PORKY HIMSELF HAD NEVER SEEN *ANY OF THOSE FILMS!* HE WAS *TERRIFIED* OF THEM! THEY GAVE HIM *NIGHTMARES!* THE ONLY REASON HE'D ALLOWED HIMSELF TO SEE "*FRANKENSTEIN*" WAS BECAUSE NO ONE KNEW *ANYTHING* ABOUT IT--NOT EVEN *CHESTER WHITING* OF THE FIFTH GRADE...

PRETTY *BORING* SO FAR ..

HE IS JUST *RESTING*. WAITING FOR A *NEW* LIFE TO COME!

SHH!

YEAH, YEAH...

SHH!

THIS MOVIE S A *LOSER!* 'm'inch 'munch

SHH!

KNOCK IT OFF, WEBSTER!

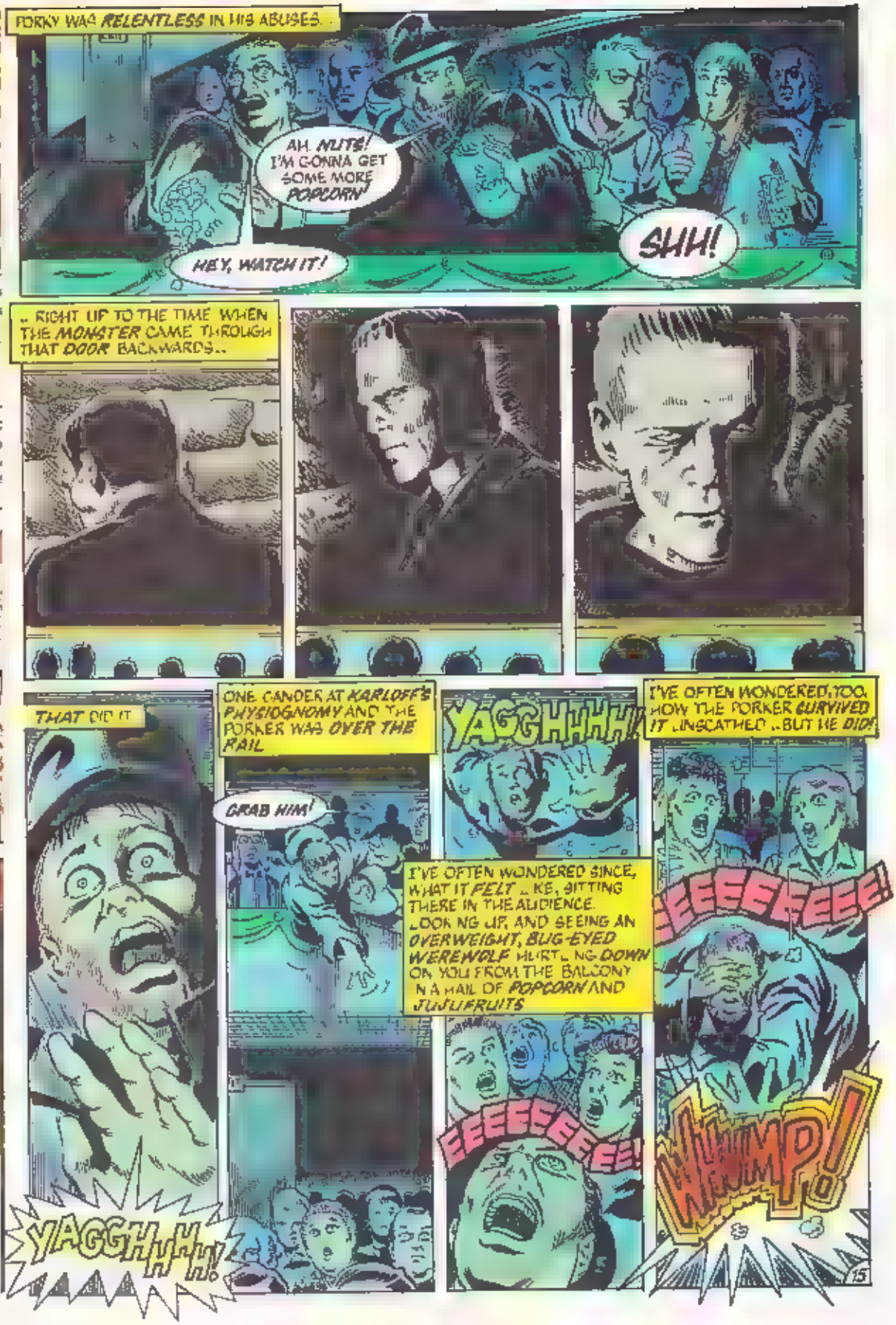
IT WENT ON LIKE THAT, PORKY MUNCHING POPCORN *LOUDLY* AND CRITIQUING *EVERY* MINUTE OF CELLULOID...

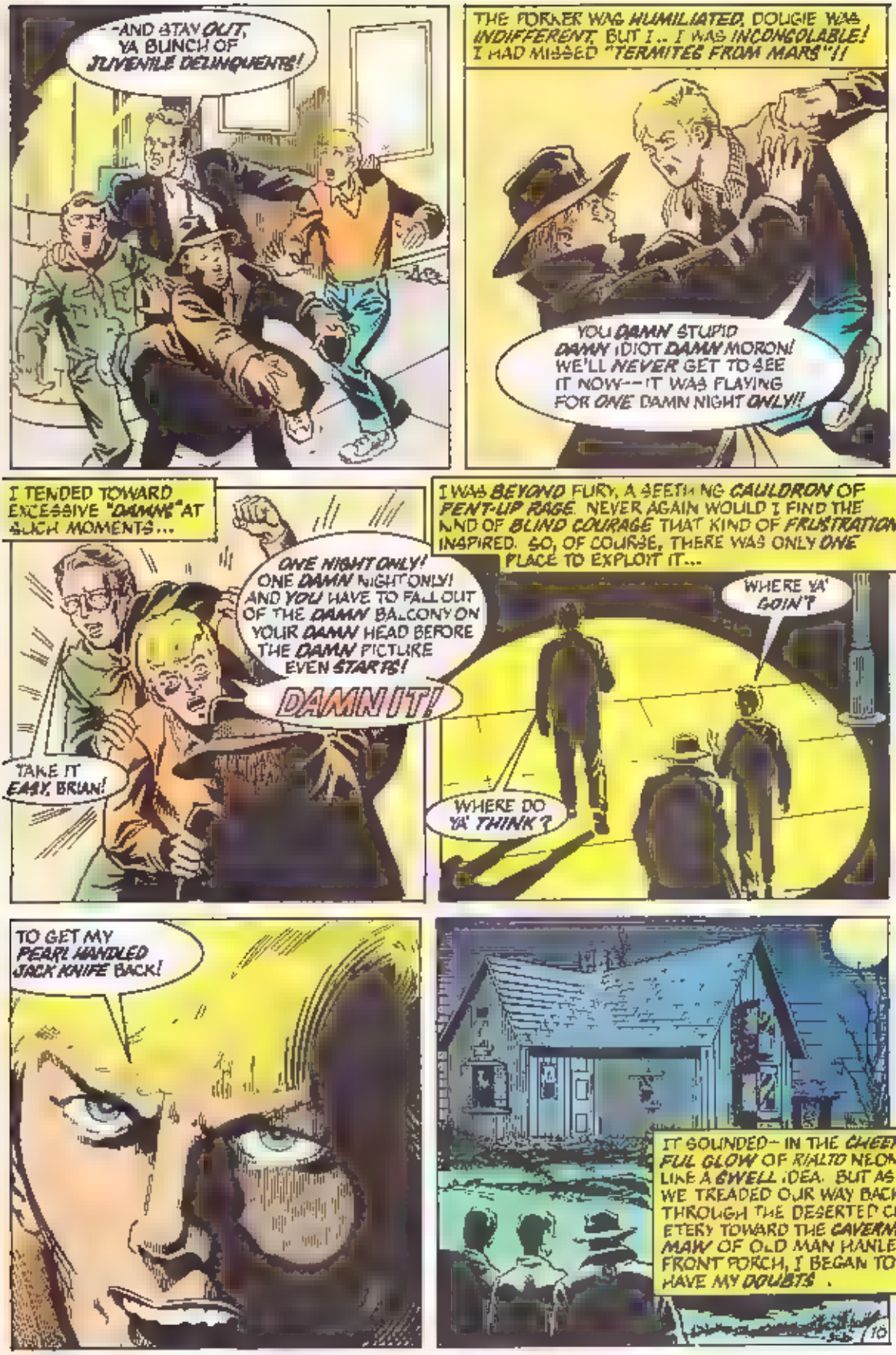
GOOD! IN FIFTEEN MINUTES THE *STORM* SHOULD BE AT ITS *HEIGHT!* THEN WE'LL BE *READY!*

SHH!

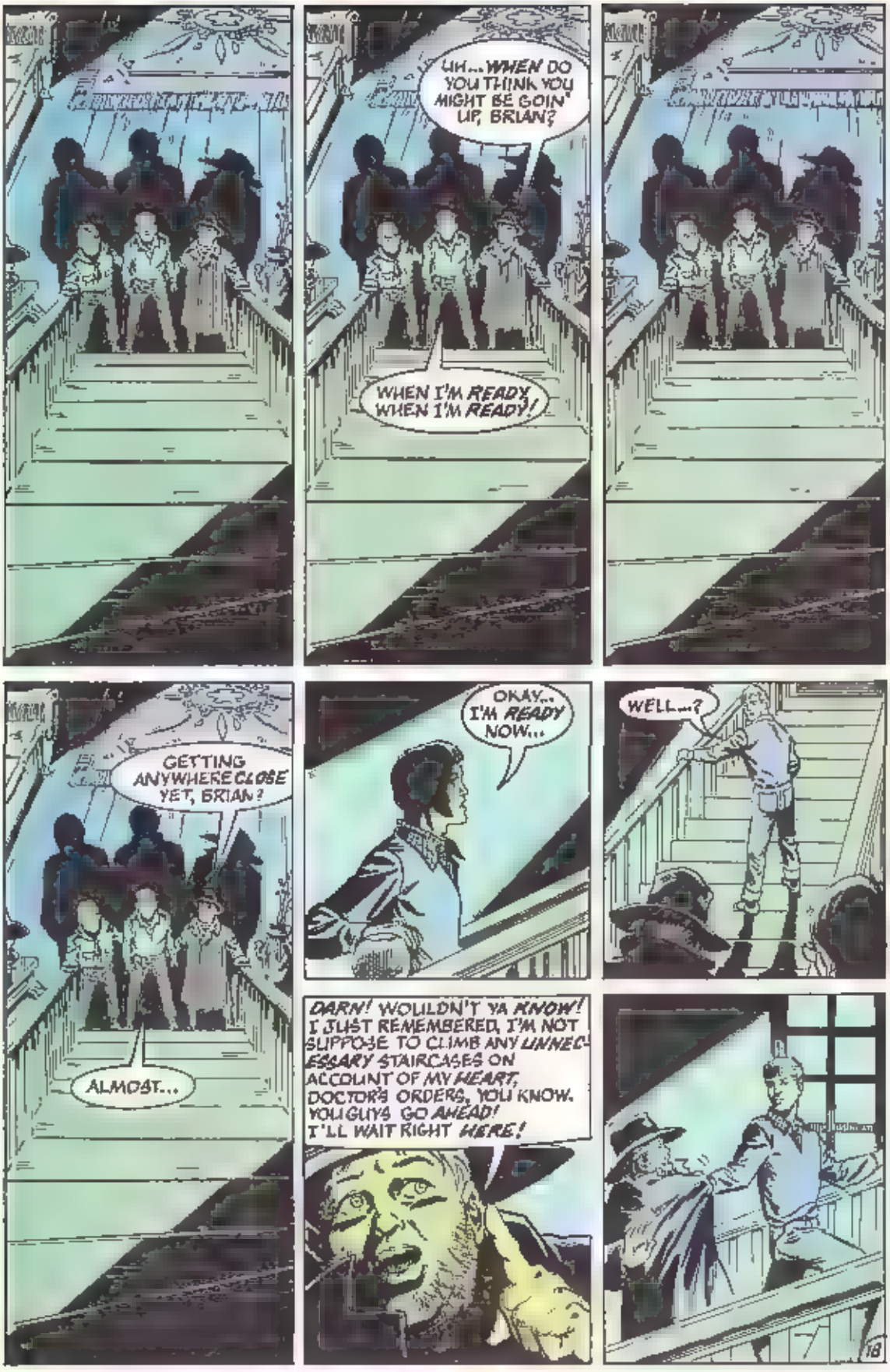
LOOKS LIKE THE *BOILER ROOM* AT SCHOOL!

SHH!


PORKY WAS RELENTLESS IN HIS ABUSES...
AH, NUTS! I'M GONNA GET SOME MORE POPCORN!
HEY, WATCH IT!
SHH!
.. RIGHT UP TO THE TIME WHEN THE MONSTER CAME THROUGH THAT DOOR BACKWARDS...
THAT DID IT
ONE GANDER AT KARLOFF'S PHYSIOGNOMY AND THE PORKER WAS OVER THE RAIL
GRAB HIM!
YAGGHHHH!
I'VE OFTEN WONDERED SINCE, WHAT IT FELT .. KE, SITTING THERE IN THE AUDIENCE. LOOK NG UP, AND SEEING AN OVERWEIGHT, BUG-EYED WERENOLF HURTL NG DOWN ON YOU FROM THE BALCONY N A HAIL OF POPCORN AND JUJUFRUITS
EEEEEEEEE!
YAGGHHHH!
I'VE OFTEN WONDERED, TOO, HOW THE PORKER SURVIVED IT .UNSCATHED ..BUT HE DID!
EEEEEEEEE!
WHUMP!
15

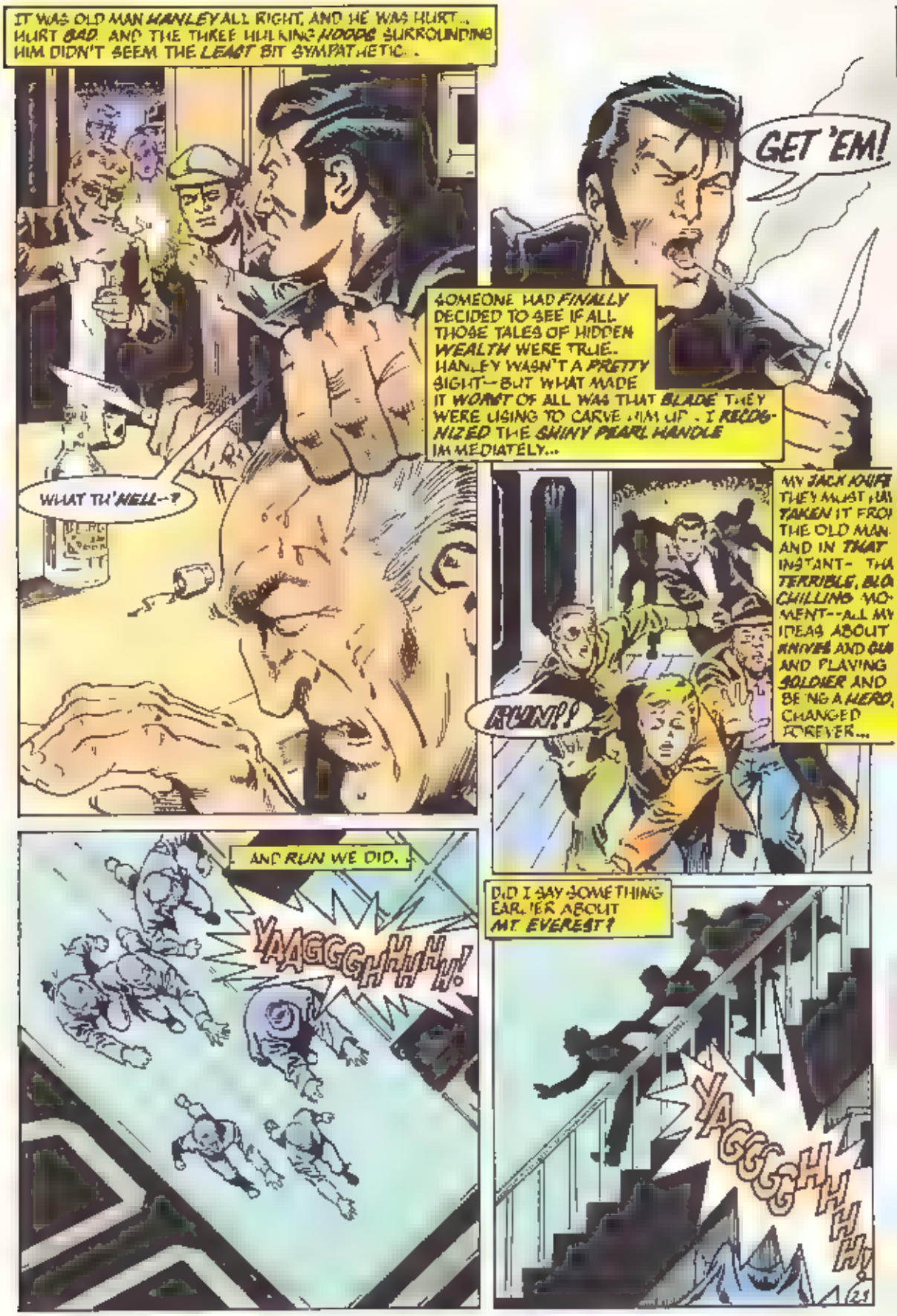

--AND STAY OUT, YA BUNCH OF JUVENILE DELINQUENTS!
THE FORMER WAS HUMILIATED, DOUGIE WAS INDIFFERENT, BUT I .. I WAS INCONSOLABLE! I HAD MISSED "TERMITES FROM MARS"!!
YOU DAMN STUPID DAMN IDIOT DAMN MORON! WE'LL NEVER GET TO SEE IT NOW--IT WAS PLAYING FOR ONE DAMN NIGHT ONLY!!
I TENDED TOWARD EXCESSIVE "DAMN" AT SUCH MOMENTS...
ONE NIGHT ONLY! ONE DAMN NIGHT ONLY! AND YOU HAVE TO FALL OUT OF THE DAMN BALCONY ON YOUR DAMN HEAD BEFORE THE DAMN PICTURE EVEN STARTS!
DAMN IT!
TAKE IT EASY, BRIAN!
I WAS BEYOND FURY, A SEETHING CAULDRON OF PENT-UP RAGE. NEVER AGAIN WOULD I FIND THE KIND OF BLIND COURAGE THAT KIND OF FRUSTRATION INSPIRED. SO, OF COURSE, THERE WAS ONLY ONE PLACE TO EXPLOIT IT...
WHERE YA' GOIN'?
WHERE DO YA' THINK?
TO GET MY PEARL HANDLED JACK KNIFE BACK!
IT SOUNDED-- IN THE CHEERFUL GLOW OF RIALTO NEON-- LIKE A SWELL IDEA. BUT AS WE TREADED OUR WAY BACK THROUGH THE DESERTED CEMETERY TOWARD THE CAVERNOUS MAW OF OLD MAN HANLEY'S FRONT PORCH, I BEGAN TO HAVE MY DOUBTS.
10

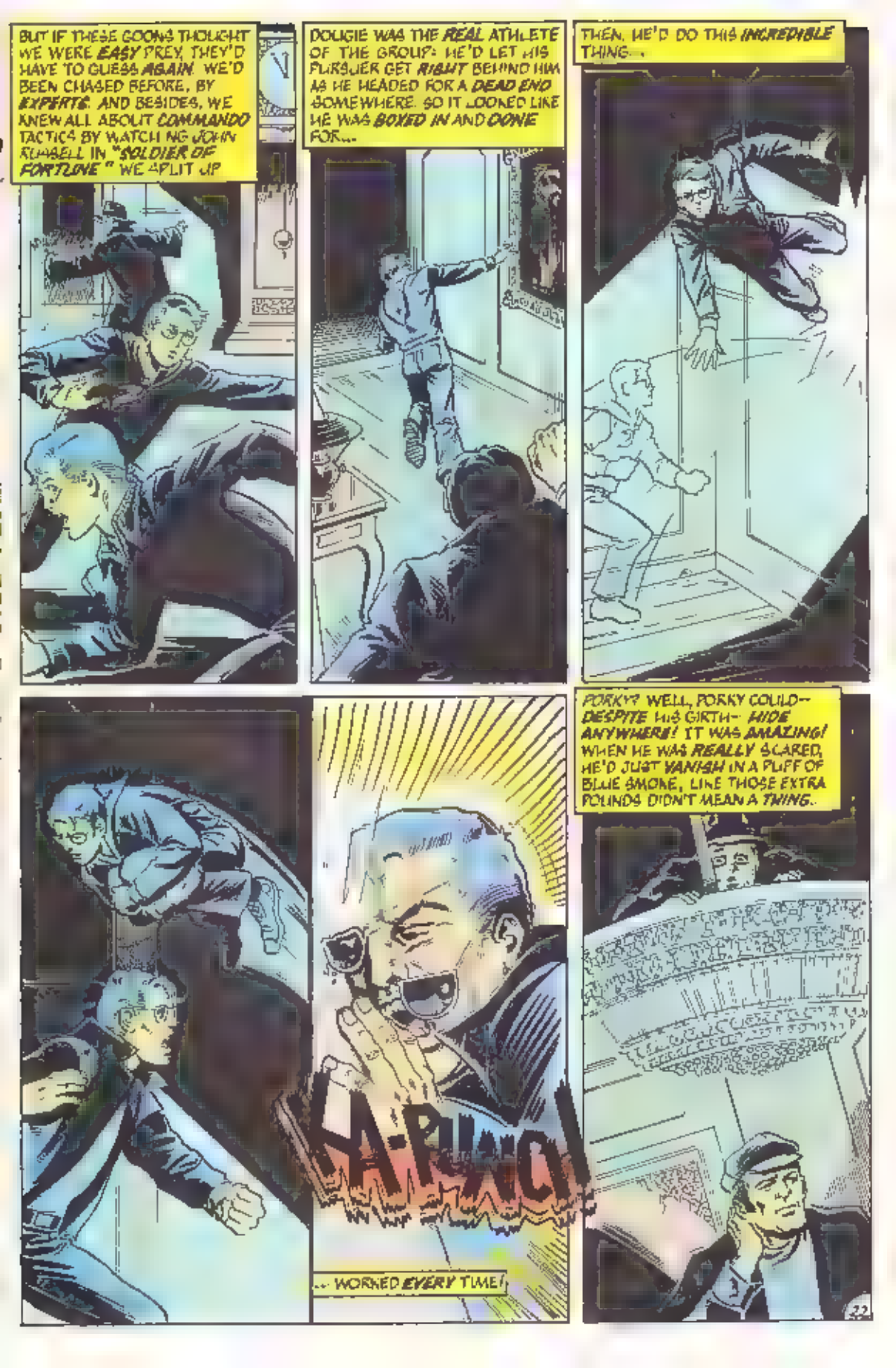
BUT ONCE ONE HAS COMMITTED ONE'S SELF IN FRONT OF ONE'S PEERS, THERE IS NO GOING BACK THIS IS AN UNWRITTEN LAW AMONG YOUTH. ASK ANYONE IN THE SIXTH GRADE IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE ME --
AREN'T YA' EVEN GOING TO KNOCK, BRIAN?
HE NEVER COMES WHEN YA' KNOCK!
EVER SEEN ONE OF THOSE REALLY CORNY 1930S HAUNTED HOUSE MOVIES WHERE THE BIG CORNY-LOOKING DOOR OPENS WITH A REAL LOUD CORNY-SOUNDING CREAK? KNOW SOMETHING?
CRRRRRRRRAAAK
IT AIN'T CORNY...
..JEEPERS! ..
..W WHERE DO YOU SUPPOSE HE'D KEEP A PEARL-HANDLED JACK KNIFE IN HERE?
P-PROBABLY WITH ALL HIS OTHER KNIVES ..AND GUNS AND AXES AND SPEARS AND HATCHETS AND: --
SHUT UP, PORKY!
A-ARE YOU GOIN' UP, BRIAN?
OF COURSE ..
17


UH... WHEN DO YOU THINK YOU MIGHT BE GOIN' UP, BRIAN?
WHEN I'M READY, WHEN I'M READY!
GETTING ANYWHERE CLOSE YET, BRIAN?
ALMOST...
OKAY... I'M READY NOW...
WELL...?
DARN! WOULDN'T YA KNOW! I JUST REMEMBERED, I'M NOT SUPPOSE TO CLIMB ANY UNNEC-ESSARY STAIRCASES ON ACCOUNT OF MY HEART, DOCTOR'S ORDERS, YOU KNOW. YOU GUYS GO AHEAD! I'LL WAIT RIGHT HERE!
18

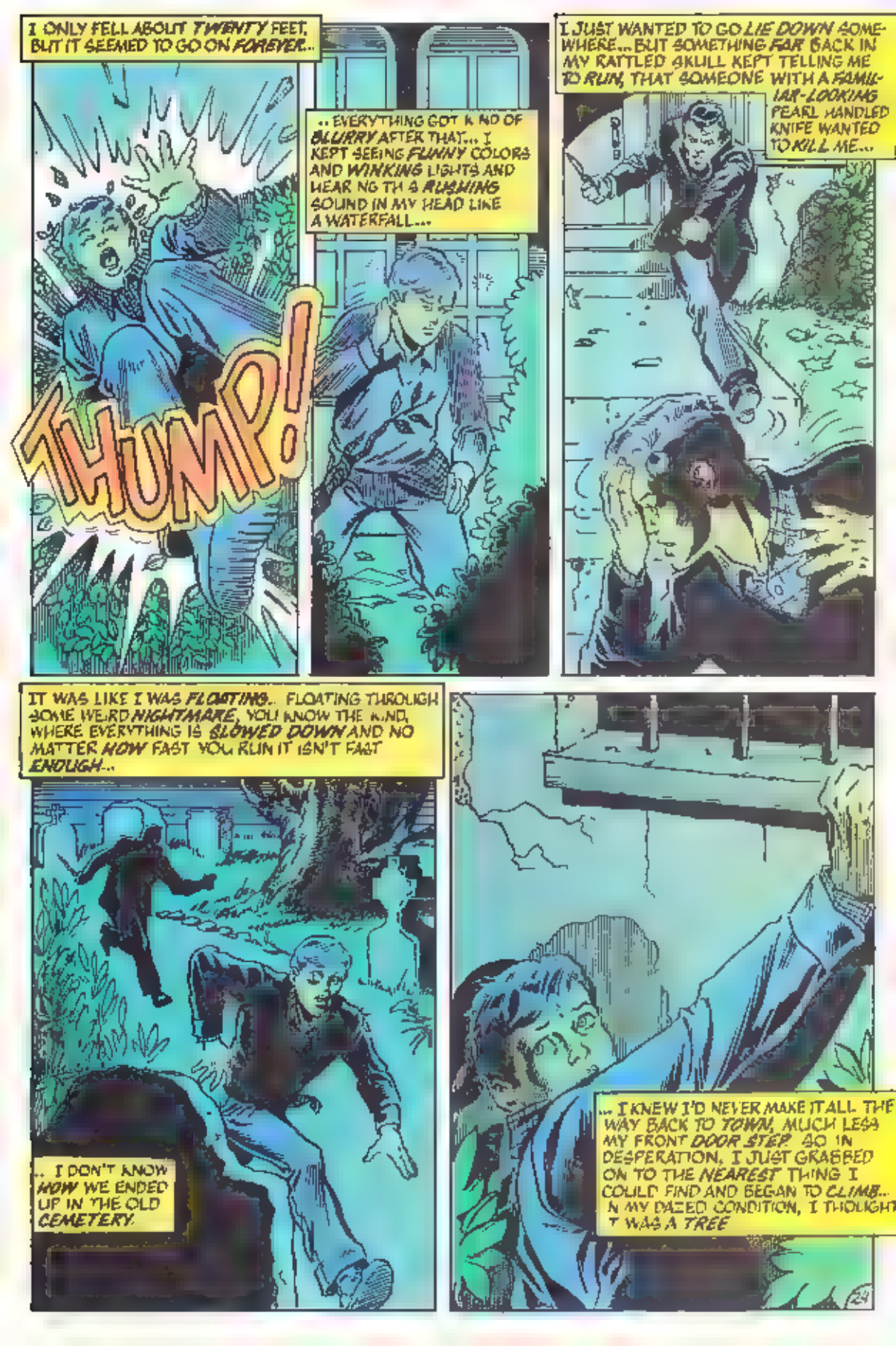
AT LAST, WE ACHIEVED THE SUMMIT, AND THERE STOOD BREATHLESSLY, GAZING DOWN A HALLWAY MORE DARK AND TERRIBLE THAN THE HIMALAYAS DEEPEST CREVASSE.
DOES ANYBODY REMEMBER TO BRING A FLASHLIGHT?..
WHY DON'T YOU JUST FLIP THE WALLSWITCH, PUTZBURGER?
WHY DON'T YOU FLIP IT FAG-FACE?
CAUSE I'M NOT THE ONE THAT WAS STUPID ENOUGH TO FALL OUT OF THE BALCONY, WHICH IS WHY WE'RE HERE IN THE FIRST PLACE, DORK-BRAIN!
THEY CLAIM THAT MOUNT EVEREST IS ONE OF THE LONGEST, MOST TORTUROUS CLIMBS IMAGINABLE-- THEY OBVIOUSLY NEVER ENCOUNTERED THE HANLEY MANSION STAIRCASE ON HALLOWEEN NIGHT
HOMO!
WEENIE HEAD!
QUEER BAIT!
DICK BREATH!
SH! LISTEN!
AND THEN I CAME ..A SOUND I SHALL REMEMBER ALL THE REST OF MY DAYS. ..A LOW, GUTTURAL, GROAN THAT ROSE QUAVERING INTO A GHASTLY ANIMAL-LIKE WAIL ECHOING TOWARD US FROM SOMEWHERE WITHIN THE STYGIAN DEPTHS OF THAT MALIGNANT HOUSE
MOOOAAAANNNNN
IT WAS FOLLOWED IMMEDIATELY BY A GAGGING, NOSTRIL-SEARING SMELL LIKE SOMETHING FROM THE PIT OF HELL ITSELF LIKE, LIKE STALE CHILI AND RIALTO POPCORN.
JESUS, PORKER, WAS THAT YOU?
SORRY FELLAS, I THINK I FILLED MY PANTS!
19

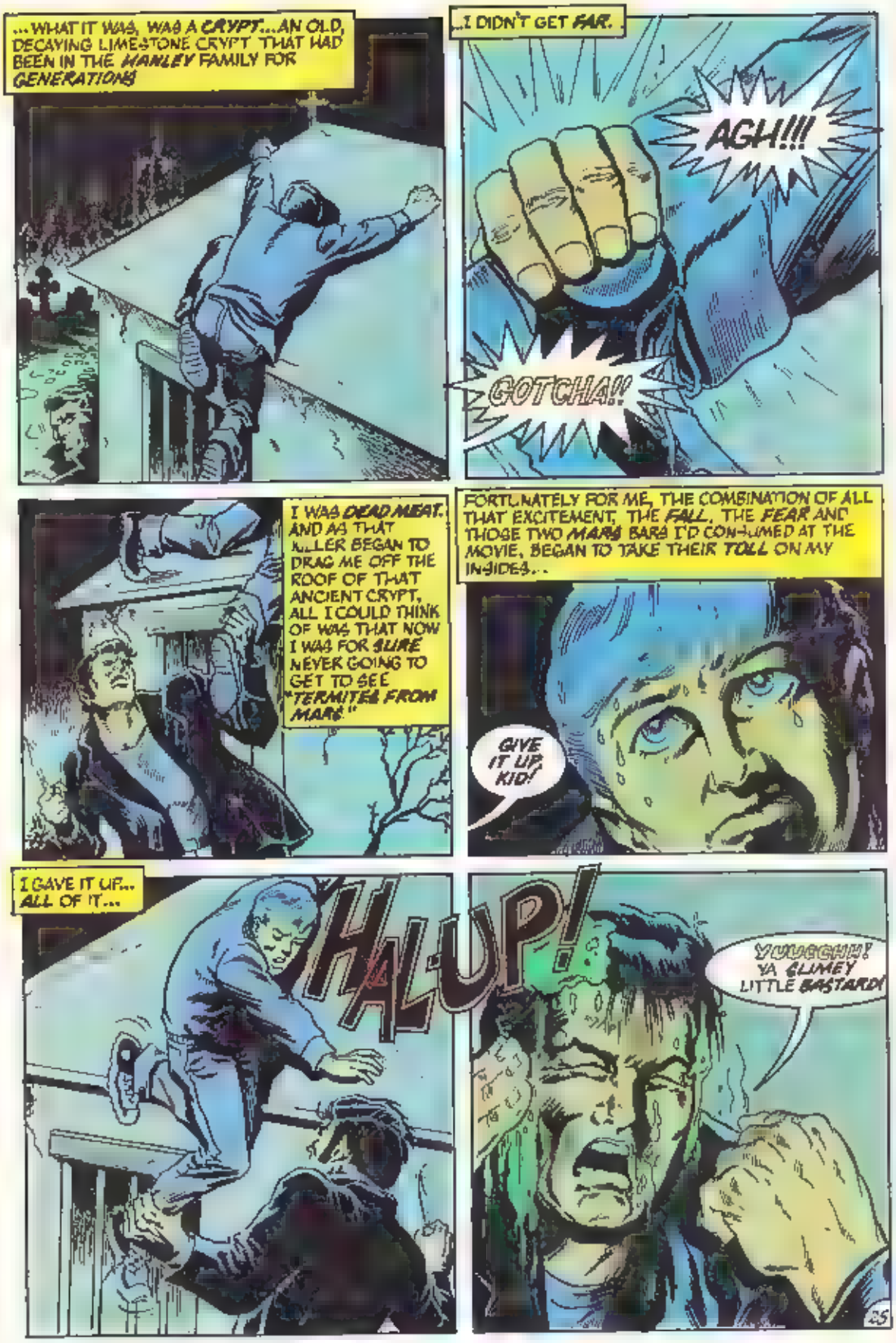
HEN, THAT AWFUL MOAN AGAIN... DUDER THIS TIME...
CHRIST, WHAT IS THAT?
IT'S HIM! OLD MAN HANLEY! HE DID DIE
MOOOAAAANNNNN
IT'S HIS GHOST! HE'S COMING FOR US. HE KNOWS WE'RE TRESPASSING AND HE'S GONNA SWOOP DOWN ON US AND TEAR OFF OUR HEADS AND SHOVE RAT SHIT DOWN OUR NECKS AND HACK OUR BODIES INTO A MILLION LITTLE--
SHUT UP WEBSTER!
MAYBE THE OLD GUY'S IN TROUBLE. MAYBE HE FELL AND HURT HIMSELF OR SOMETHING.
C'MON
IT'S RIGHT BEHIND THIS DOOR.
DON'T OPEN IT, BRIAN, PLEASE! OH, CHRIST, DON'T OPEN IT! I'LL GIVE YOU ANYTHING. ANYTHING! I NEVER TOLD YOU, BUT I'VE GOT THAT BUBBLE GUM CARD YOU ALWAYS WANTED--"CRASH LANDING IN A MERCURIAN BOG!" IT'S ALL YOURS, JUST PLEASE DON'T OPEN THAT DOOR!
MOOOAAAANNNNN
OOR OLD PORKER. TREMBLING THERE LIKE A EASED JELLY FISH. EYES WIDE AND TERROR ILLED, MOUTH DRY AND BLITHERING. HE WAS EALLY A SWEET LITTLE GUY AND A GOOD FRIEND, ND I'D NEVER SEEN MY LITTLE BUDDY SO OARED IN ALL HIS LIFE--
--SO NATURALLY I JUST HAD TO OPEN THE DOOR.
OH, MY GOD!
CEEZ!
OH, SHIT.
20


IT WAS OLD MAN HANLEY ALL RIGHT, AND HE WAS HURT... HURT BAD. AND THE THREE HULKING HOODS SURROUNDING HIM DIDN'T SEEM THE LEAST BIT SYMPATHETIC...
GET 'EM!
SOMEONE HAD FINALLY DECIDED TO SEE IF ALL THOSE TALES OF HIDDEN WEALTH WERE TRUE.. HANLEY WASN'T A PRETTY SIGHT--BUT WHAT MADE IT WORST OF ALL WAS THAT BLADE THEY WERE USING TO CARVE HIM UP... I RECOGNIZED THE SHINY PEARL HANDLE IMMEDIATELY...
WHAT TH' HELL--?
MY JACK KNIFE! THEY MUST HAVE TAKEN IT FROM THE OLD MAN... AND IN THAT INSTANT- THAT TERRIBLE, BLOOD CHILLING MOMENT--ALL MY IDEAS ABOUT KNIVES AND GUNS AND PLAYING SOLDIER AND BEING A HERO, CHANGED FOREVER...
RUN!!
AND RUN WE DID...
YAAGGGHHHHH!
DID I SAY SOMETHING EARLIER ABOUT MT EVEREST?
YAGGGHHHHH!
25


BUT IF THESE GOONS THOUGHT WE WERE EASY PREY, THEY'D HAVE TO GUESS AGAIN. WE'D BEEN CHASED BEFORE, BY EXPERTS. AND BESIDES, WE KNEW ALL ABOUT COMMANDO TACTICS BY WATCHING JOHN RUSSELL IN "SOLDIER OF FORTUNE" WE SPLIT UP
DOUGIE WAS THE REAL ATHLETE OF THE GROUP: HE'D LET HIS PURSUER GET RIGHT BEHIND HIM AS HE HEADED FOR A DEAD END SOMEWHERE. SO IT LOOKED LIKE HE WAS BOXED IN AND DONE FOR...
THEN, HE'D DO THIS INCREDIBLE THING...
PORKY? WELL, PORKY COULD-- DESPITE HIS GIRTH-- HIDE ANYWHERE! IT WAS AMAZING! WHEN HE WAS REALLY SCARED, HE'D JUST VANISH IN A PUFF OF BLUE SMOKE, LIKE THOSE EXTRA POUNDS DIDN'T MEAN A THING..
KA-PUNCH!
... WORKED EVERY TIME!
22

OF COURSE, ALL THAT POPCORN AND CHILI DIDN'T HELP HIS CONCEALMENT TACTICS...
WHAT THE HELL IS THAT SMELL?
SOMETHIN' DIE?
TINKLE! TINKLE!
HEY!
CRASSH!
ME, I WAS THE SPRINTER OF THE GROUP. I COULD OUTRUN ANYONE AT SCHOOL EXCEPT MAYBE BILLY JACKSON, BUT FOR SOME REASON, I HAD THIS TERRIFIC URGE TO TRY THAT NEAT BOUNCING-OFF-THE-WALL TRICK OF DOUGIE'S...
IT PROBABLY WOULD HAVE WORKED, TOO--
--IF IT HAD BEEN A WALL...
KLUERASSH!
23


I ONLY FELL ABOUT TWENTY FEET, BUT IT SEEMED TO GO ON FOREVER...
THUMP!
... EVERYTHING GOT KIND OF BLURRY AFTER THAT... I KEPT SEEING FUNNY COLORS AND WINKING LIGHTS AND HEARING THIS RUSHING SOUND IN MY HEAD LIKE A WATERFALL...
I JUST WANTED TO GO LIE DOWN SOMEWHERE... BUT SOMETHING FAR BACK IN MY RATTLED SKULL KEPT TELLING ME TO RUN, THAT SOMEONE WITH A FAMILIAR-LOOKING PEARL HANDLED KNIFE WANTED TO KILL ME...
IT WAS LIKE I WAS FLOATING... FLOATING THROUGH SOME WEIRD NIGHTMARE, YOU KNOW THE KIND, WHERE EVERYTHING IS SLOWED DOWN AND NO MATTER HOW FAST YOU RUN IT ISN'T FAST ENOUGH...
... I DON'T KNOW HOW WE ENDED UP IN THE OLD CEMETERY.
... I KNEW I'D NEVER MAKE IT ALL THE WAY BACK TO TOWN, MUCH LESS MY FRONT DOOR STEP. SO IN DESPERATION, I JUST GRABBED ON TO THE NEAREST THING I COULD FIND AND BEGAN TO CLIMB... IN MY DAZED CONDITION, I THOUGHT IT WAS A TREE
24


...WHAT IT WAS, WAS A CRYPT...AN OLD, DECAYING LIMESTONE CRYPT THAT HAD BEEN IN THE MANLEY FAMILY FOR GENERATIONS
...I DIDN'T GET FAR.
AGH!!!
GOTCHA!!
I WAS DEAD MEAT. AND AS THAT KILLER BEGAN TO DRAG ME OFF THE ROOF OF THAT ANCIENT CRYPT, ALL I COULD THINK OF WAS THAT NOW I WAS FOR SURE NEVER GOING TO GET TO SEE "TERMITES FROM MARS."
FORTUNATELY FOR ME, THE COMBINATION OF ALL THAT EXCITEMENT, THE FALL, THE FEAR AND THOSE TWO MARS BARS I'D CONSUMED AT THE MOVIE, BEGAN TO TAKE THEIR TOLL ON MY INSIDES...
GIVE IT UP, KID!
I GAVE IT UP... ALL OF IT...
HL-UP!
YUUUCCH!! YA SLIMEY LITTLE BASTARDS!
25

IT BOUGHT ME PRECIOUS SECONDS -- BUT SECONDS ONLY.
I'M GONNA CARVE YER HEART OUT, YA LITTLE CREEP!
THAT WAS WHEN THE SECOND MIRACLE OCCURRED...
CRRRTJUNNCH
ONCE I'D ATTAINED THE TOP OF THE CRYPT, THERE WAS NO PLACE ELSE TO GO, AND THAT BIG GOON WITH MY PEARL HANDLED JACK KNIFE WAS RIGHT ON TOP OF ME AGAIN...
KA-ROOOOMMM
...AND WHAT I SAW THEN, I HAVE NEVER SEEN THE LIKE OF SINCE, NOR TOLD A LIVING SOUL UNTIL NOW...
I HUNG THERE LIKE A BERSERK PENDULUM, WATCHING HIM FALL... HEARING HIM HIT THE WOODEN COFFIN TOP BELOW, SHATTERING IT INTO A MILLION TOOTHPICKS...
YAGGHHHHH!
YAGGHHHHH
20

INSECTS... PALE, LUMINOUS INSECTS WITH SKITTLING LEGS AND CLICKING JAWS... THOUSANDS OF THEM, MILLIONS OF THEM...COVERING THE CRYPT'S DANK INTERIOR AS THEY POURED FROM THE SHATTERED SIDES OF THE COFFIN...
EEEE-Ahhhhh!! GET 'EM OFF ME!
YAAAGCHHHH!!
... TERMITES...THAT'S WHAT THEY WERE. ONLY TERMITES THE SIZE AND NUMBER OF WHICH I'D NEVER SEEN BEFORE... THEY WERE HIDEOUS, VORACIOUS-LIKE CREATURES FROM ANOTHER PLANET AND THEY SWARMED LIKE A PALE, YELLOW TIDE OVER THE HYSTERICAL BODY OF MY ANTAGONIST...
AND I WOULD JOIN HIM... IN A SECOND MY NUMBING FINGERS WOULD LET GO AND I WOULD PLUMMET DOWNWARD INTO THAT SEETHING, WRITHING MASS WITH HIM... TO BE COVERED FROM HEAD TO FOOT AND SLOWLY EATEN ALIVE...
... THAT'S WHEN THE THIRD MIRACLE HAPPENED...
IT WAS THE DARK MAN APPEARING FROM OUT OF NOWHERE LIKE A SHADOWED PHANTOM FOR THE LAST TIME THAT NIGHT... FOR THE LAST TIME IN MY LIFE.
AND EVEN THOUGH I COULDN'T QUITE SEE HIS FACE IN THE DARKNESS, I HAD THE FEELING HE WAS SMILING AT ME...
27

...I GUESS I *FAINTED* AFTER THAT BECAUSE THE NEXT THING I KNEW I WAS HOME IN BED AND *MOM* WAS SERVING ME HOT *MALT-O-MEAL* AND KENNY WAS RUNNING AROUND LIKE A BANDIT ASKING A *MILLION* QUESTIONS...

...ALL'S WELL THAT *ENDS* WELL, AND THIS STORY ENDS *VERY* WELL INDEED. *DOUG* AND *FOXY* MADE IT HOME SAFELY, THE POLICE WERE NOTIFIED, OLD MAN *HANLEY* WAS REVIVED, AND THE CROOKS WERE CAUGHT. *MARGIE BREWSTER DID* FINALLY COME TO HER WINDOW THAT NIGHT, THE MOONLIGHT GLISTENING ON HER *"DILATED WHITENESS,"* BUT *DENNY COLTE* SAW IT ONLY IN HIS *DREAMS*.

SANTA CLAUS CAME ON TIME THAT YEAR, *SPRING* BLOSSOMED, FLOWERS GREW, AND I TURNED *THIRTEEN*. THE GANG AND I STARTED *JUNIOR HIGH*, BUT SOMEHOW WE DIDN'T HANG AROUND TOGETHER AS MUCH. MAYBE IT WAS GIRLS, OR MAYBE WE THOUGHT IT WASN'T *COOL* ANYMORE, OR MAYBE THE WORLD JUST SPUN TO A DIFFERENT *SEASON*.

IN MAY OF *1958*, MY FAMILY *MOVED AWAY* FROM *CRYSTAL FALLS, ILLINOIS*, TO A PLACE CALLED *ST. LOUIS*. THE YEARS ROLLED ON. I WENT TO COLLEGE, GOT MARRIED, MOVED TO *L.A.*, AND FOUND MYSELF *WRITING* MOVIES INSTEAD OF *WATCHING* THEM...

I WENT *BACK* TO THE OLD HOME TOWN RECENTLY TO VISIT MY FRIENDS. *EVERYONE* HAD MOVED AWAY BUT *DOUG FREMONT*. DOUG HAD *INHERITED* HIS PARENTS' HOUSE AFTER THEY'D BEEN KILLED IN AN AUTO ACCIDENT. IT LOOKED PRETTY MUCH THE SAME. HE EVEN HAD HIS OLD *LIONEL TRAIN* LAYOUT IN THE BASEMENT, ALTHOUGH *OTHER* HANDS WERE WORKING THE CONTROLS NOW...

IT WAS GREAT SEEING DOUG AGAIN BUT, OTHER THAN REMINISCING ABOUT THE *OLD* DAYS, WE REALLY DIDN'T HAVE ALL THAT MUCH TO SAY TO EACH OTHER. THEY ASKED ME TO STAY THE NIGHT BUT I TOLD THEM I HAD TO GET BACK TO *L.A.*, WHICH WAS ONLY *PARTIALLY* A LIE...

... I NEVER GOT TO SEE "TERMITES FROM MARS," AND I'VE NEVER SEEN IT LISTED IN ANY OF THE REFERENCE BOOKS. AT TIMES, IT SEEMS LIKE THAT WHOLE HALLOWEEN NIGHT OF 1956 WAS NO MORE THAN A HALF-FORGOTTEN DREAM, SPUN FROM THE FEVERED MIND OF AN OVER-IMAGINATIVE TWELVE YEAR OLD. AND YET... I CAN STILL SEE SO VIVIDLY THAT AWFUL, THRASHING FORM... THOSE PALE, SCRAMBLING BODIES...

... I NEVER TOLD ANYONE ABOUT THE DARK MAN AND HOW HE SAVED ME FROM THE PIT. THAT PART SEEMS LIKE A DREAM TOO SOMETIMES. AND IT TOOK ME YEARS TO FIGURE OUT WHO THE DARK MAN WAS AND WHAT HE WAS DOING THERE THAT NIGHT. IT WAS PORKY'S FATHER, OF COURSE. WATCHING OVER HIS CHUBBY SON... WATCHING OVER, INADVERTENTLY, HIS SON'S FALL. BUT WHETHER HE WAS FLESH AND BLOOD OR A RESTLESS SPIRIT ROAMING THE ANCIENT GRAVES OF UNION CEMETERY, I HAVE NO IDEA. I CONSIDERED TELLING PORKY WEBSTER ABOUT MY THEORY, BUT I SORT OF LOST CONTACT WITH HIM THROUGH THE YEARS. BESIDES, SOME THINGS, I THINK, ARE BETTER OFF LEFT UNSAID. WHOEVER--WHATEVER--THAT DARK FIGURE WAS, IT WANTED TO BE LEFT ALONE.

BUILDING TOMORROW'S ILLINOIS TODAY!

Crystal Falls

POPULATION: 10,000

SPEED CHECKED BY RADAR

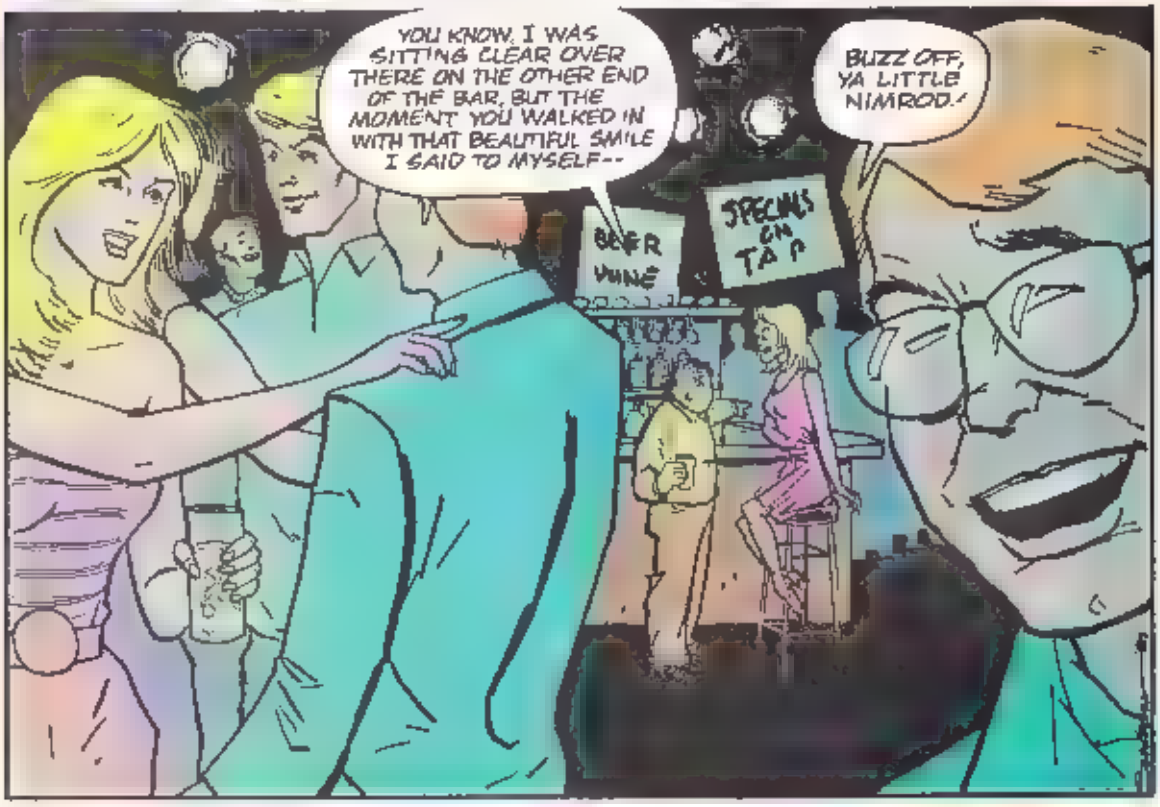
CRYSTAL FALLS, THOUGH, WOULD NOT BE LEFT ALONE. IT CHANGED. GREW. THEY WIDENED THE STREETS AND BUILT TWO NEW HIGH SCHOOLS AND ENDLESS SUPERMARKETS AND AN ENORMOUS, THREE-STORIED SHOPPING MALL WITH TWO HOURS OF FREE PARKING. AND THEY TORE DOWN THE RIALTO THEATER.

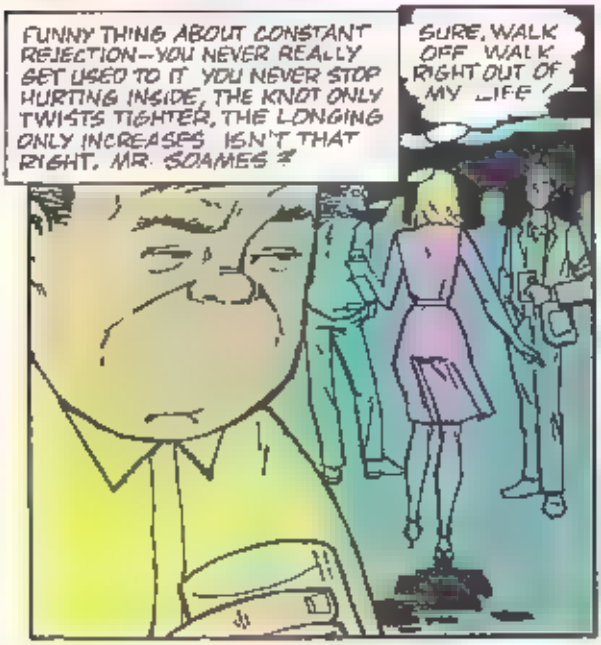
LIKE ALL TOWNS--LIKE ALL THINGS--CRYSTAL FALLS MOVED FORWARD: OBEDIENTLY, UNERRINGLY, ENDLESSLY. BECAUSE REALLY, IN THE END, THERE WAS NO PLACE ELSE IT COULD GO...

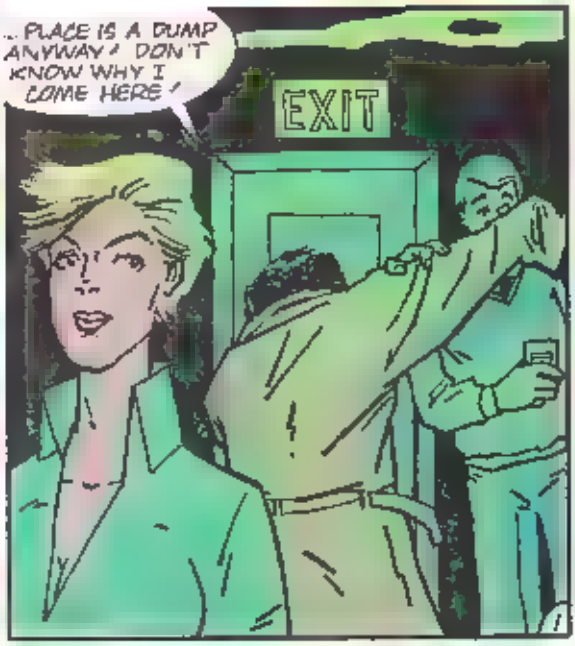
YOU KNOW WHAT IT FEELS LIKE, DON'T YOU, MR SOAMES? OH, YOU KNOW ALL TOO WELL THE FEELINGS OF HOPELESSNESS, FRUSTRATION, AND ALIENATION THAT COME FROM BEING SOMEONE LIKE YOU. SOMEONE LIKE YOU SOMEONE NOT VERY PRETTY, NOT VERY TALL, NOT VERY SOPHISTICATED OR ARTICULATE SOMEONE WHO DOESN'T HAVE THAT SPECIAL KNACK FOR DRESSING WELL, FOR CHOOSING THE LATEST FASHIONS, THE CURRENT HAIR STYLE SOMEONE WHO STUMBLES AND SPUTTERS THROUGH LIFE, WATCHING WITH GRINDING ENVY THE OTHERS - THE TALL, THE HANDSOME THE WELL-GROOMED -- WHO GLIDE... SIMPLY GLIDE...

FRATERNITY

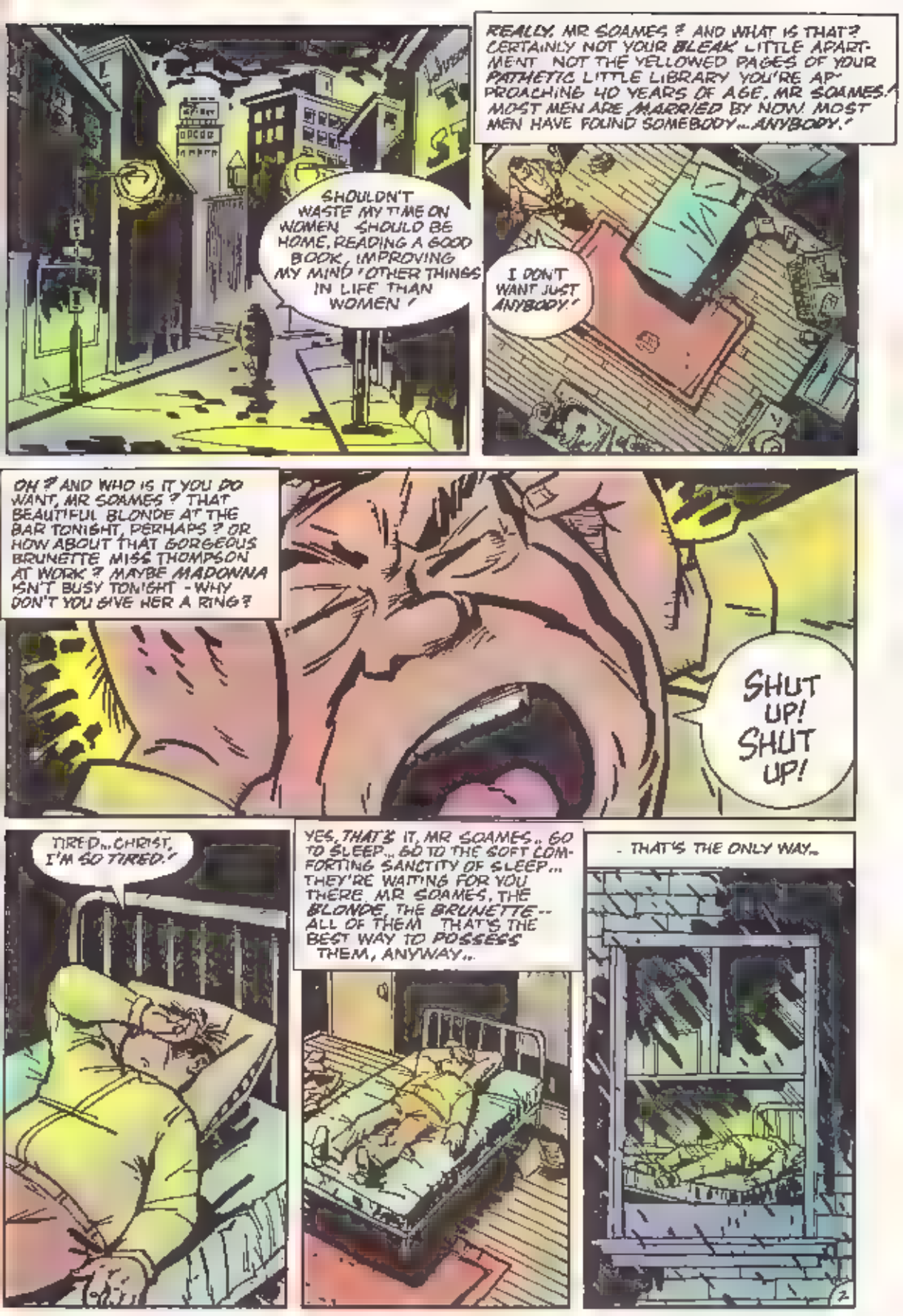
JUST ONCE YOU'D LIKE TO BE NOTICED FOR SOMETHING BESIDES YOUR BALD SPOT.. JUST ONCE YOU'D LIKE TO BE ON THE RECEIVING END OF A WARM, FEMININE SMILE TO SCORE WITH ONE OF THOSE BEAUTIFUL DISHES AT THE NEW CONGRESS CLUB.. TO BE ABLE TO SAY THE RIGHT WORDS...

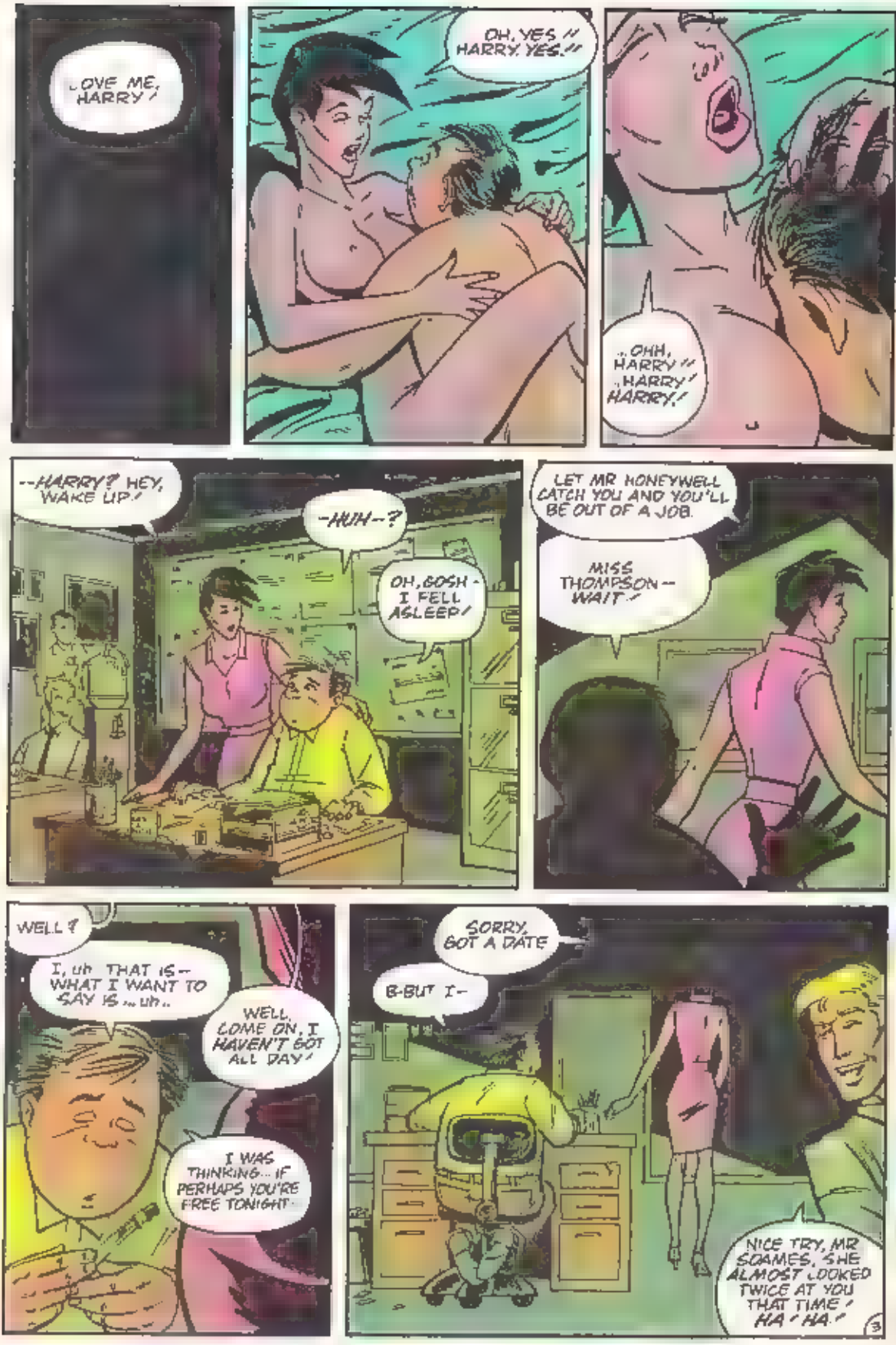

YOU KNOW, I WAS SITTING CLEAR OVER THERE ON THE OTHER END OF THE BAR, BUT THE MOMENT YOU WALKED IN WITH THAT BEAUTIFUL SMILE I SAID TO MYSELF--
BUZZ OFF, YA LITTLE NIMROD!
BEER WINE
SPECIALS ON TAP

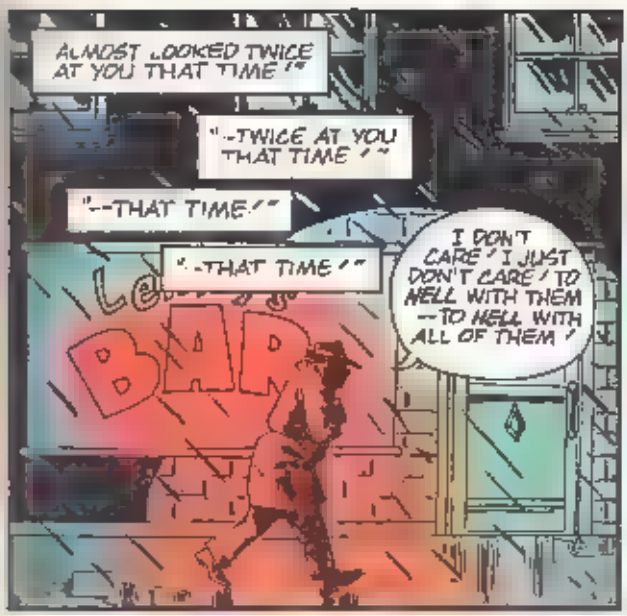

FUNNY THING ABOUT CONSTANT REJECTION--YOU NEVER REALLY GET USED TO IT. YOU NEVER STOP HURTING INSIDE, THE KNOT ONLY TWISTS TIGHTER, THE LONGING ONLY INCREASES. ISN'T THAT RIGHT, MR. SOAMES?
SURE, WALK OFF. WALK RIGHT OUT OF MY LIFE!



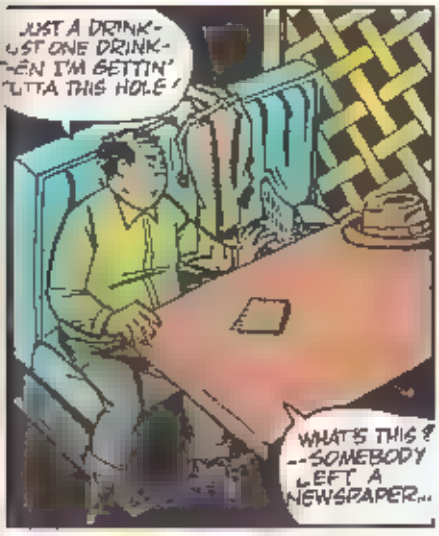
Story: Bruce Jones Art: Scott Saavedra Letters: Kurt Hathaway Colours: Barbara Marker

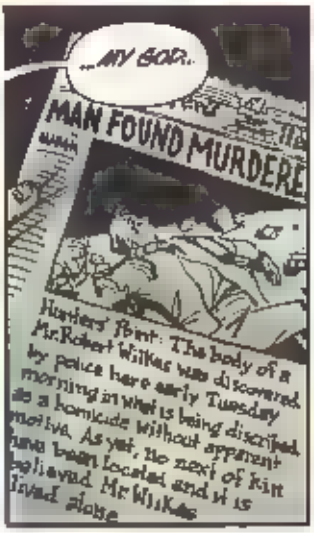

SHOULDN'T WASTE MY TIME ON WOMEN. SHOULD BE HOME, READING A GOOD BOOK, IMPROVING MY MIND! OTHER THINGS IN LIFE THAN WOMEN!
REALLY, MR SOAMES? AND WHAT IS THAT? CERTAINLY NOT YOUR BLEAK LITTLE APARTMENT. NOT THE YELLOWED PAGES OF YOUR PATHETIC LITTLE LIBRARY YOU'RE APPROACHING 40 YEARS OF AGE, MR SOAMES. MOST MEN ARE MARRIED BY NOW. MOST MEN HAVE FOUND SOMEBODY... ANYBODY.
I DON'T WANT JUST ANYBODY!
OH? AND WHO IS IT YOU DO WANT, MR SOAMES? THAT BEAUTIFUL BLONDE AT THE BAR TONIGHT, PERHAPS? OR HOW ABOUT THAT GORGEOUS BRUNETTE MISS THOMPSON AT WORK? MAYBE MADONNA ISN'T BUSY TONIGHT - WHY DON'T YOU GIVE HER A RING?
SHUT UP! SHUT UP!
TIRED... CHRIST, I'M SO TIRED.
YES, THAT'S IT, MR SOAMES... GO TO SLEEP... GO TO THE SOFT COMFORTING SANCTITY OF SLEEP... THEY'RE WAITING FOR YOU THERE, MR SOAMES, THE BLONDE, THE BRUNETTE -- ALL OF THEM. THAT'S THE BEST WAY TO POSSESS THEM, ANYWAY...
- THAT'S THE ONLY WAY...
2

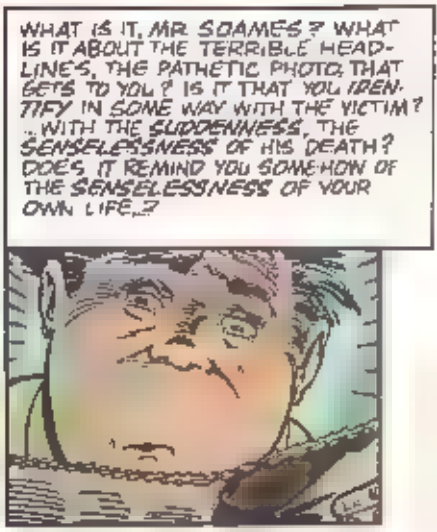

LOVE ME, HARRY!
OH, YES!! HARRY, YES!!
..OHH, HARRY!! ..HARRY! HARRY!
--HARRY? HEY, WAKE UP!
-HUH--?
OH, GOSH - I FELL ASLEEP!
LET MR HONEYWELL CATCH YOU AND YOU'LL BE OUT OF A JOB.
MISS THOMPSON-- WAIT--!
WELL?
I, uh THAT IS-- WHAT I WANT TO SAY IS .. uh..
WELL, COME ON, I HAVEN'T GOT ALL DAY!
I WAS THINKING... IF PERHAPS YOU'RE FREE TONIGHT..
SORRY, GOT A DATE
B-BUT I--
NICE TRY, MR SOAMES. SHE ALMOST LOOKED TWICE AT YOU THAT TIME! HA! HA!
3

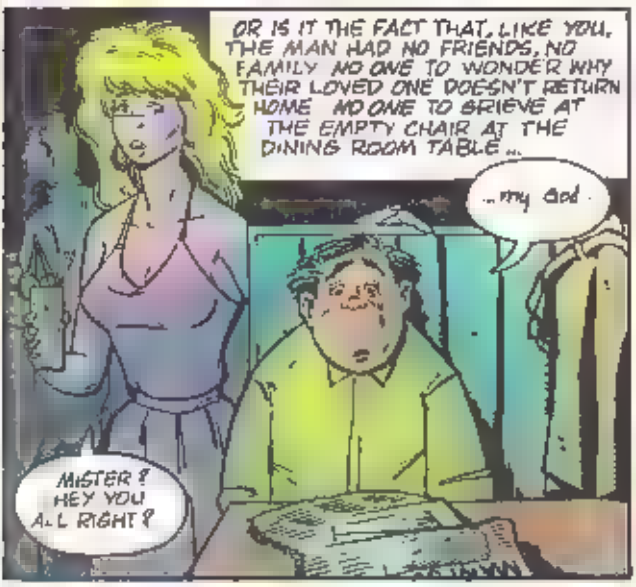

ALMOST LOOKED TWICE AT YOU THAT TIME!"
"--TWICE AT YOU THAT TIME!"
"--THAT TIME!"
"--THAT TIME!"
I DON'T CARE! I JUST DON'T CARE! TO HELL WITH THEM --TO HELL WITH ALL OF THEM!
BAR

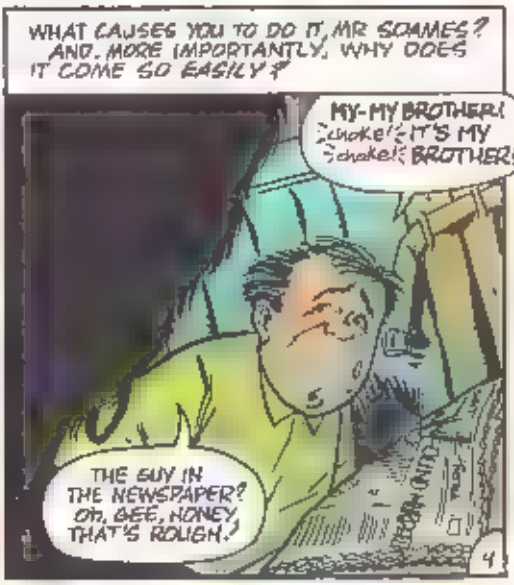
HI YA, SOAMES! GETTIN' ANY YET? Hee-Hee!
EVER TRY ONE OF THEM PLASTIC WOMEN, SOAMES? Har-Har!

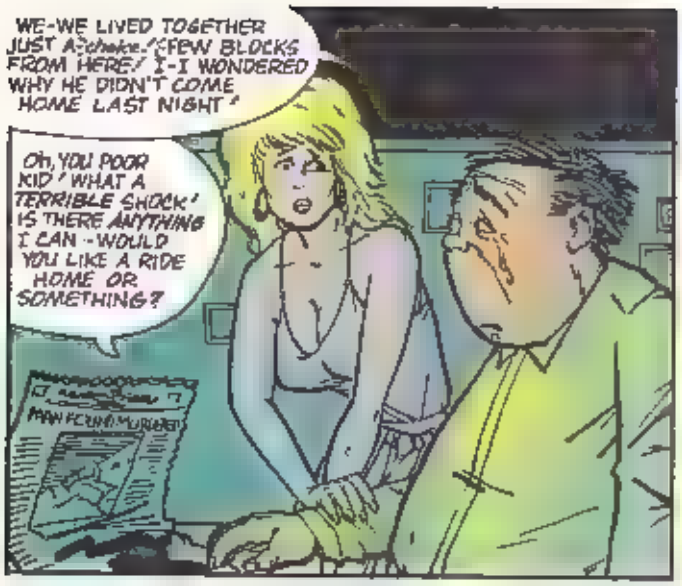

JUST A DRINK- JUST ONE DRINK- THEN I'M GETTIN' OUTTA THIS HOLE!
WHAT'S THIS? --SOMEBODY LEFT A NEWSPAPER...

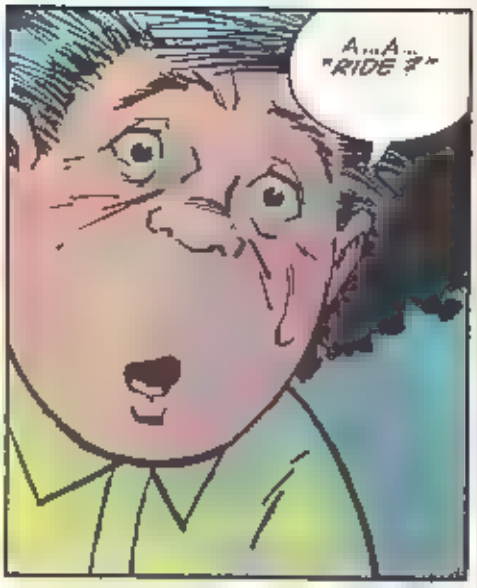

...MY GOD...
MAN FOUND MURDERED
Hunters Point: The body of a Mr. Robert Wilkes was discovered by police here early Tuesday morning in what is being described as a homicide without apparent motive. As yet, no next of kin have been located, and it is believed Mr. Wilkes lived alone

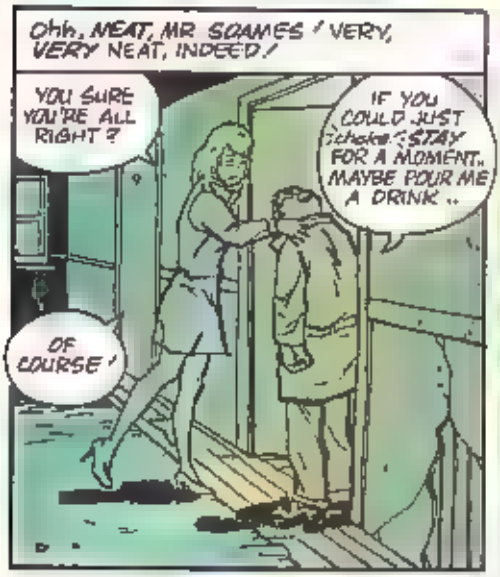

WHAT IS IT, MR. SOAMES? WHAT IS IT ABOUT THE TERRIBLE HEADLINES, THE PATHETIC PHOTO, THAT GETS TO YOU? IS IT THAT YOU IDENTIFY IN SOME WAY WITH THE VICTIM? ...WITH THE SUDDENNESS, THE SENSELESSNESS OF HIS DEATH? DOES IT REMIND YOU SOMEHOW OF THE SENSELESSNESS OF YOUR OWN LIFE...?

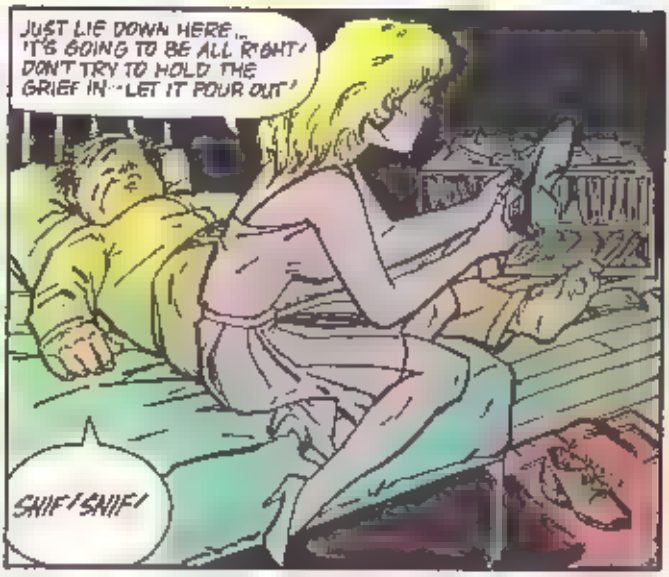

OR IS IT THE FACT THAT, LIKE YOU, THE MAN HAD NO FRIENDS, NO FAMILY NO ONE TO WONDER WHY THEIR LOVED ONE DOESN'T RETURN HOME NO ONE TO GRIEVE AT THE EMPTY CHAIR AT THE DINING ROOM TABLE...
...my God...
MISTER? HEY YOU ALL RIGHT?

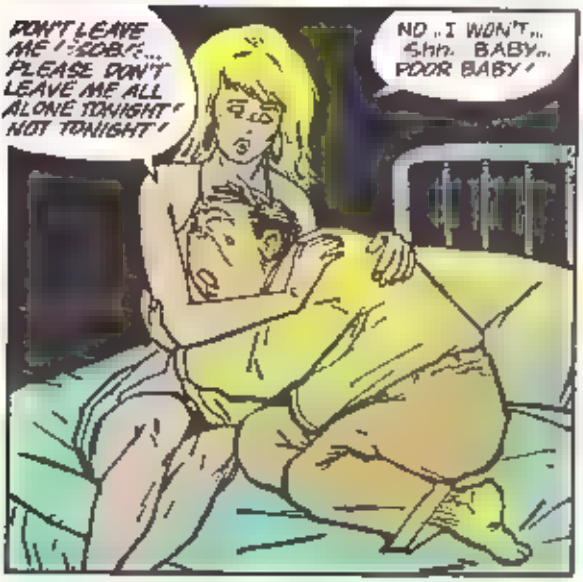

WHAT CAUSES YOU TO DO IT, MR. SOAMES? AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY, WHY DOES IT COME SO EASILY?
MY-MY BROTHER! [shake!] IT'S MY [shake!] BROTHER!
THE GUY IN THE NEWSPAPER? OH, GEE, HONEY, THAT'S ROUGH.
4


WE-WE LIVED TOGETHER JUST A FEW BLOCKS FROM HERE! I-I WONDERED WHY HE DIDN'T COME HOME LAST NIGHT!
Oh, YOU POOR KID! WHAT A TERRIBLE SHOCK! IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN -- WOULD YOU LIKE A RIDE HOME OR SOMETHING?
MAN FOUND MURDER

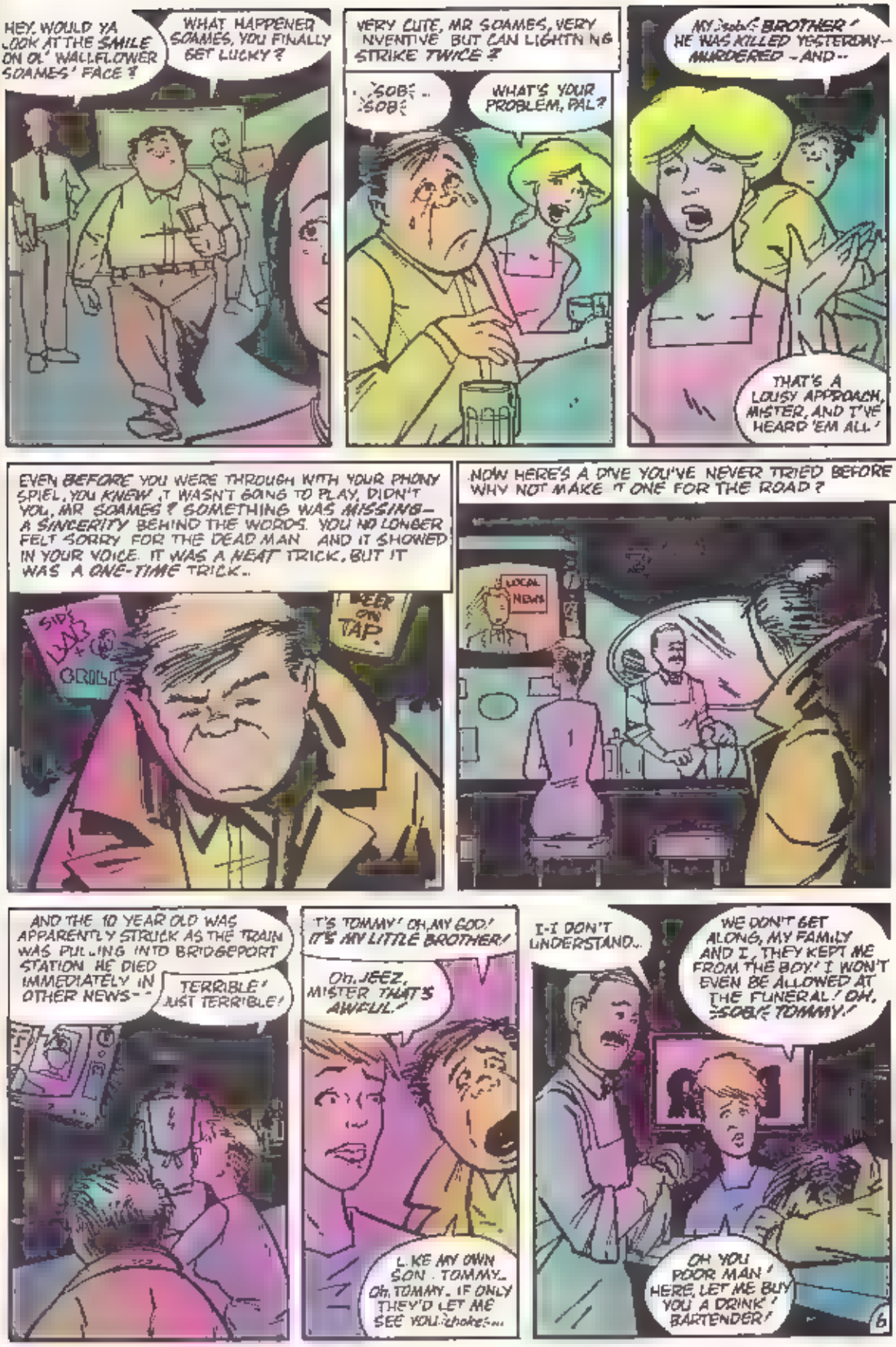

A...A... "RIDE?"

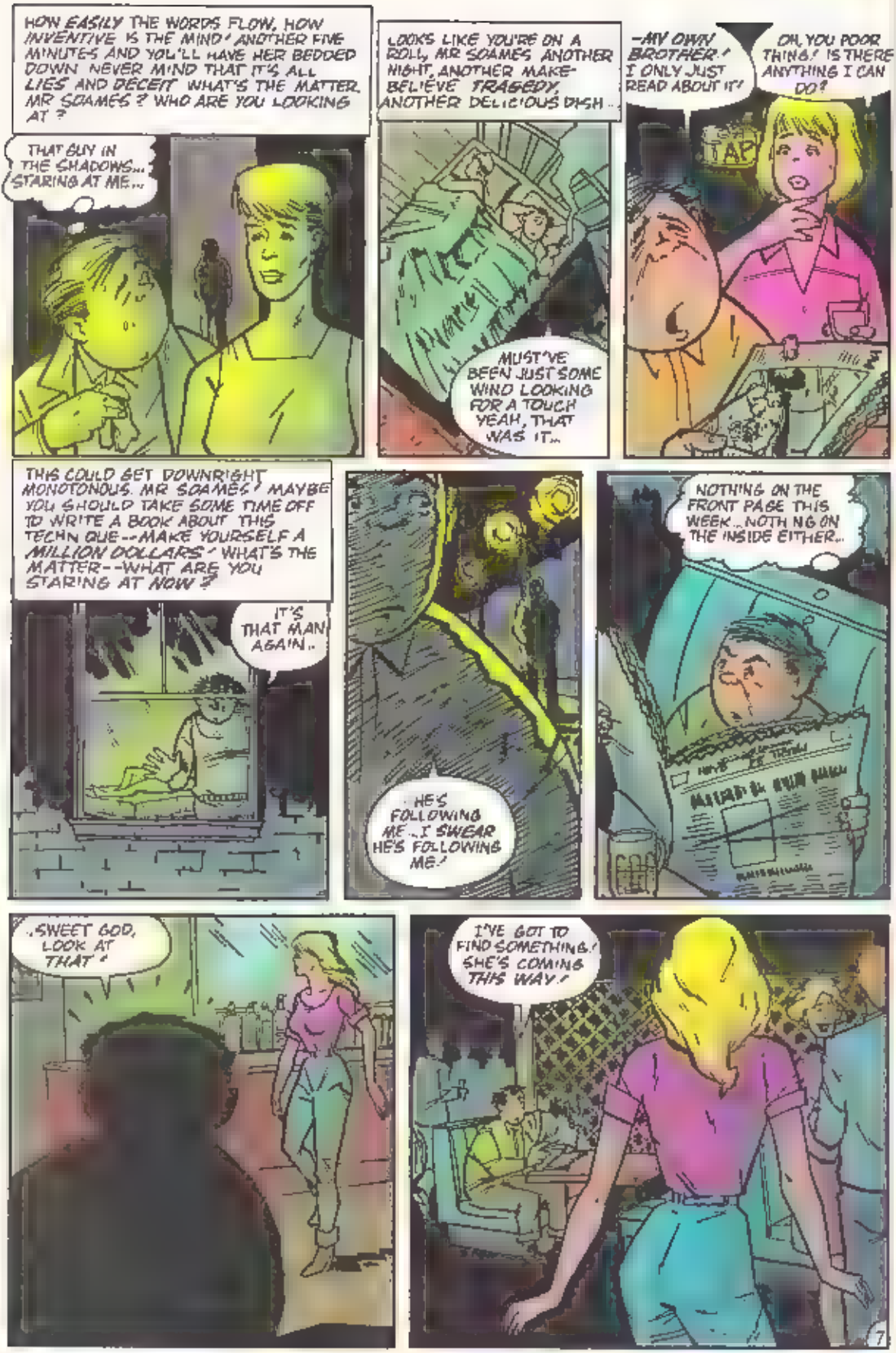

Ohh, NEAT, MR SOAMES! VERY, VERY NEAT, INDEED!
YOU SURE YOU'RE ALL RIGHT?
IF YOU COULD JUST STAY FOR A MOMENT.. MAYBE POUR ME A DRINK..
OF COURSE!

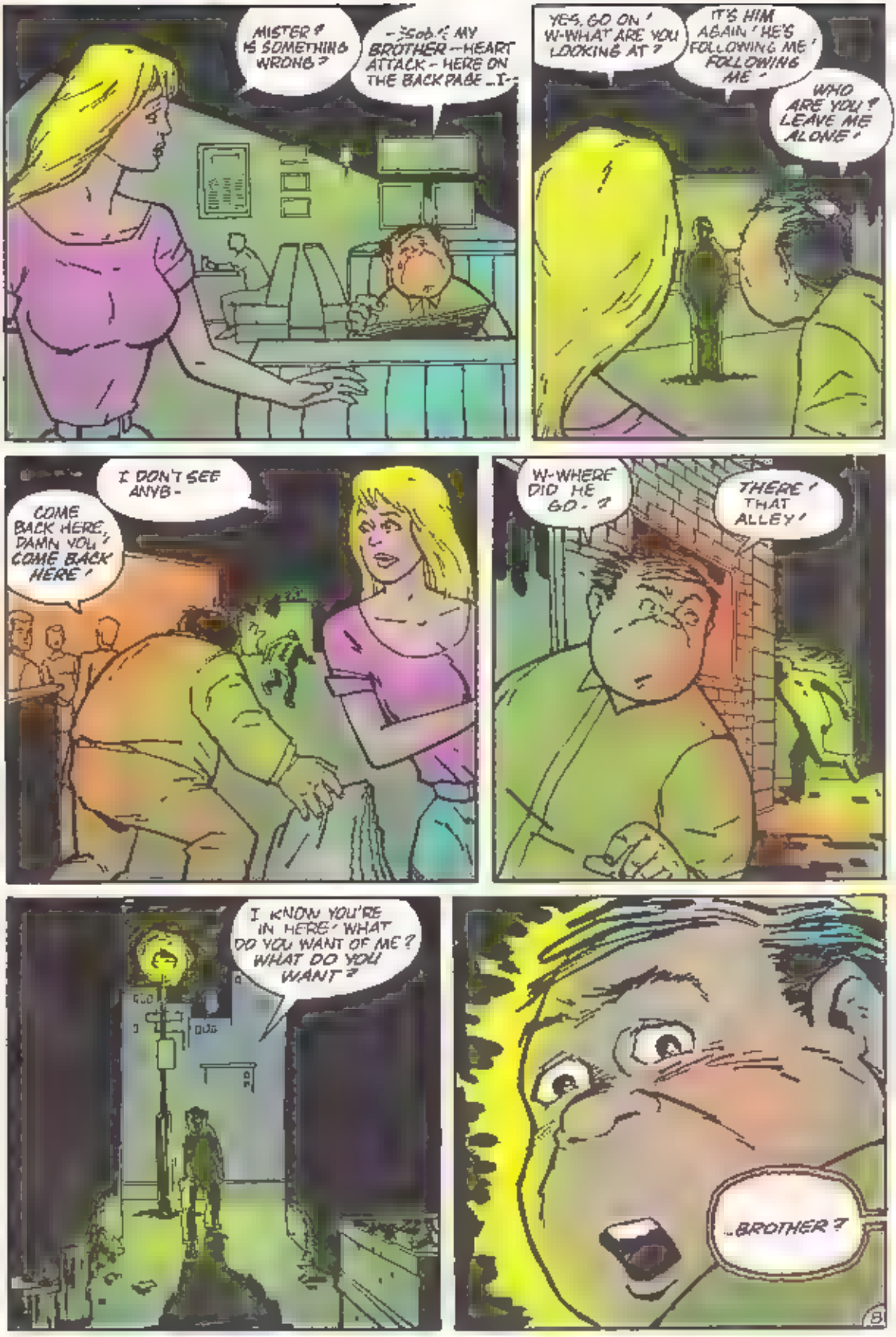

JUST LIE DOWN HERE.. IT'S GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT! DON'T TRY TO HOLD THE GRIEF IN -- LET IT POUR OUT!
SNIF! SNIF!

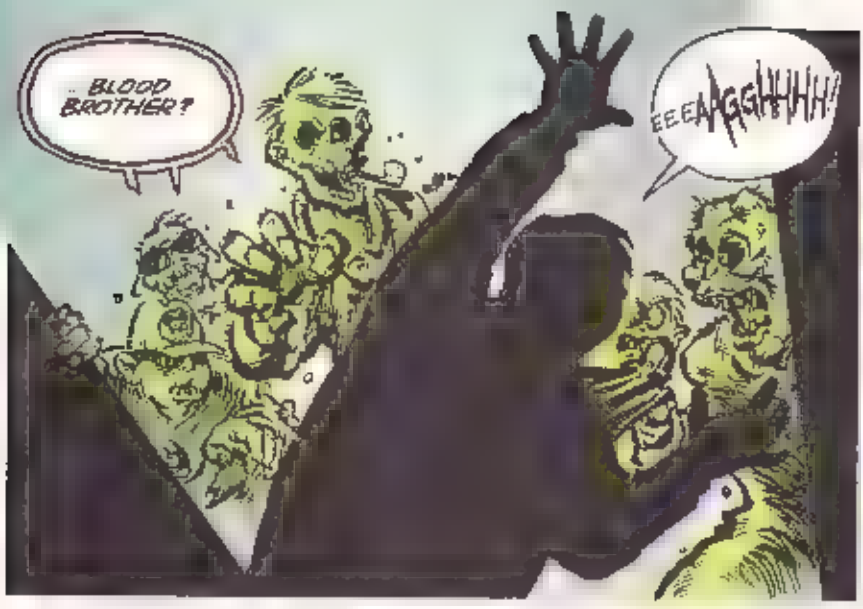

DON'T LEAVE ME! SOB!... PLEASE DON'T LEAVE ME ALL ALONE TONIGHT! NOT TONIGHT!
NO.. I WON'T.. Shh. BABY.. POOR BABY!

YES.. mmmm BABY.. POOR BABY..


HEY, WOULD YA LOOK AT THE SMILE ON OL' WALLFLOWER SOAMES' FACE?
WHAT HAPPENED SOAMES, YOU FINALLY GET LUCKY?
VERY CUTE, MR SOAMES, VERY INVENTIVE BUT CAN LIGHTNING STRIKE TWICE?
SOB... SOB...
WHAT'S YOUR PROBLEM, PAL?
MY BROTHER! HE WAS KILLED YESTERDAY-- MURDERED --AND--
THAT'S A LOUSY APPROACH, MISTER, AND I'VE HEARD 'EM ALL!
EVEN BEFORE YOU WERE THROUGH WITH YOUR PHONY SPIEL, YOU KNEW IT WASN'T GOING TO PLAY, DIDN'T YOU, MR SOAMES? SOMETHING WAS MISSING-- A SINCERITY BEHIND THE WORDS. YOU NO LONGER FELT SORRY FOR THE DEAD MAN AND IT SHOWED IN YOUR VOICE. IT WAS A NEAT TRICK, BUT IT WAS A ONE-TIME TRICK..
SIP'S LUNCH + GRILL
BEER ON TAP
NOW HERE'S A DIVE YOU'VE NEVER TRIED BEFORE WHY NOT MAKE IT ONE FOR THE ROAD?
LOCAL NEWS
AND THE 10 YEAR OLD WAS APPARENTLY STRUCK AS THE TRAIN WAS PULLING INTO BRIDGEPORT STATION. HE DIED IMMEDIATELY IN OTHER NEWS--
TERRIBLE! JUST TERRIBLE!
IT'S TOMMY! OH, MY GOD! IT'S MY LITTLE BROTHER!
OH, JEEZ, MISTER THAT'S AWFUL!
LIKE MY OWN SON. TOMMY.. OH, TOMMY.. IF ONLY THEY'D LET ME SEE YOU! choke...
I-I DON'T UNDERSTAND..
WE DON'T GET ALONG, MY FAMILY AND I, THEY KEPT ME FROM THE BOY! I WON'T EVEN BE ALLOWED AT THE FUNERAL! OH, SOB TOMMY!
OH YOU POOR MAN! HERE, LET ME BUY YOU A DRINK! BARTENDER!
6


HOW EASILY THE WORDS FLOW, HOW INVENTIVE IS THE MIND! ANOTHER FIVE MINUTES AND YOU'LL HAVE HER BEDDED DOWN NEVER MIND THAT IT'S ALL LIES AND DECEIT WHAT'S THE MATTER, MR SOAMES? WHO ARE YOU LOOKING AT?
THAT GUY IN THE SHADOWS... STARING AT ME...
LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE ON A ROLL, MR SOAMES ANOTHER NIGHT, ANOTHER MAKE-BELIEVE TRAGEDY, ANOTHER DELICIOUS DISH..
MUST'VE BEEN JUST SOME WIND LOOKING FOR A TOUCH YEAH, THAT WAS IT..
-MY OWN BROTHER! I ONLY JUST READ ABOUT IT!
OH, YOU POOR THING! IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN DO?
THIS COULD GET DOWNRIGHT MONOTONOUS, MR SOAMES! MAYBE YOU SHOULD TAKE SOME TIME OFF TO WRITE A BOOK ABOUT THIS TECHNIQUE--MAKE YOURSELF A MILLION DOLLARS! WHAT'S THE MATTER--WHAT ARE YOU STARING AT NOW?
IT'S THAT MAN AGAIN..
HE'S FOLLOWING ME..I SWEAR HE'S FOLLOWING ME!
NOTHING ON THE FRONT PAGE THIS WEEK..NOTHING ON THE INSIDE EITHER..
..SWEET GOD, LOOK AT THAT!
I'VE GOT TO FIND SOMETHING! SHE'S COMING THIS WAY!
7


MISTER? IS SOMETHING WRONG?
-SOB- MY BROTHER--HEART ATTACK--HERE ON THE BACK PAGE...I--
YES, GO ON. W-WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT?
IT'S HIM AGAIN! HE'S FOLLOWING ME! FOLLOWING ME!
WHO ARE YOU? LEAVE ME ALONE!
I DON'T SEE ANYB-
COME BACK HERE, DAMN YOU, COME BACK HERE!
W-WHERE DID HE GO-?
THERE! THAT ALLEY!
I KNOW YOU'RE IN HERE! WHAT DO YOU WANT OF ME? WHAT DO YOU WANT?
...BROTHER?
8

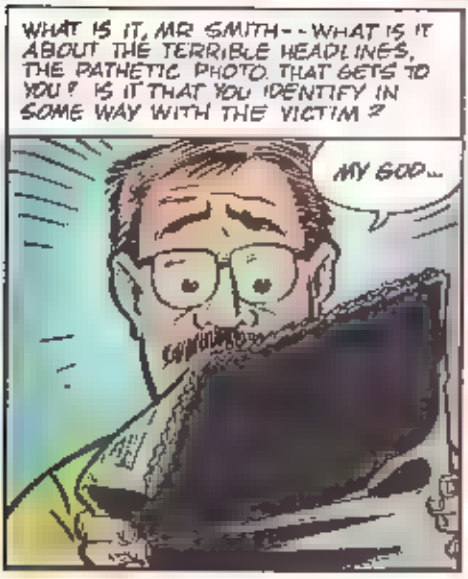

BLOOD BROTHER?
EEEAAGGHHHHH!

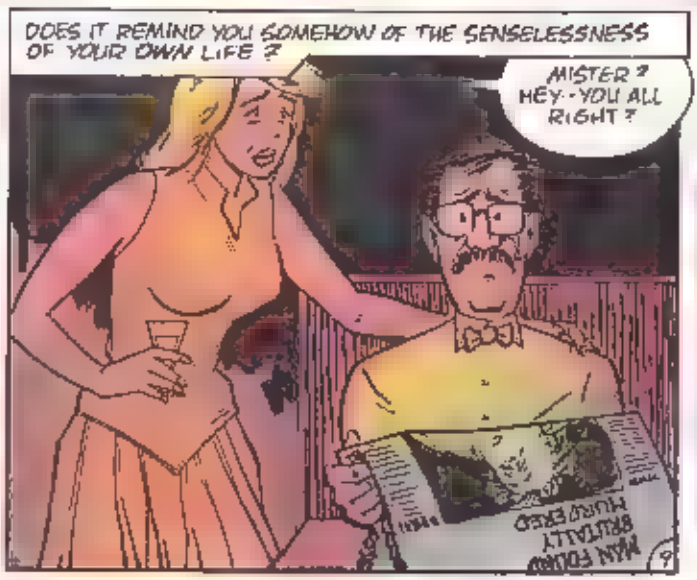
eeee
AGGHHHH!

YOU KNOW WHAT IT FEELS LIKE DON'T YOU, MR SMITH?--OH, YOU KNOW ALL TOO WELL THE FEELINGS OF HOPELESSNESS, FRUSTRATION, AND ALIENATION THAT COME FROM BEING SOMEONE LIKE YOU...
A
R
&
GRILL

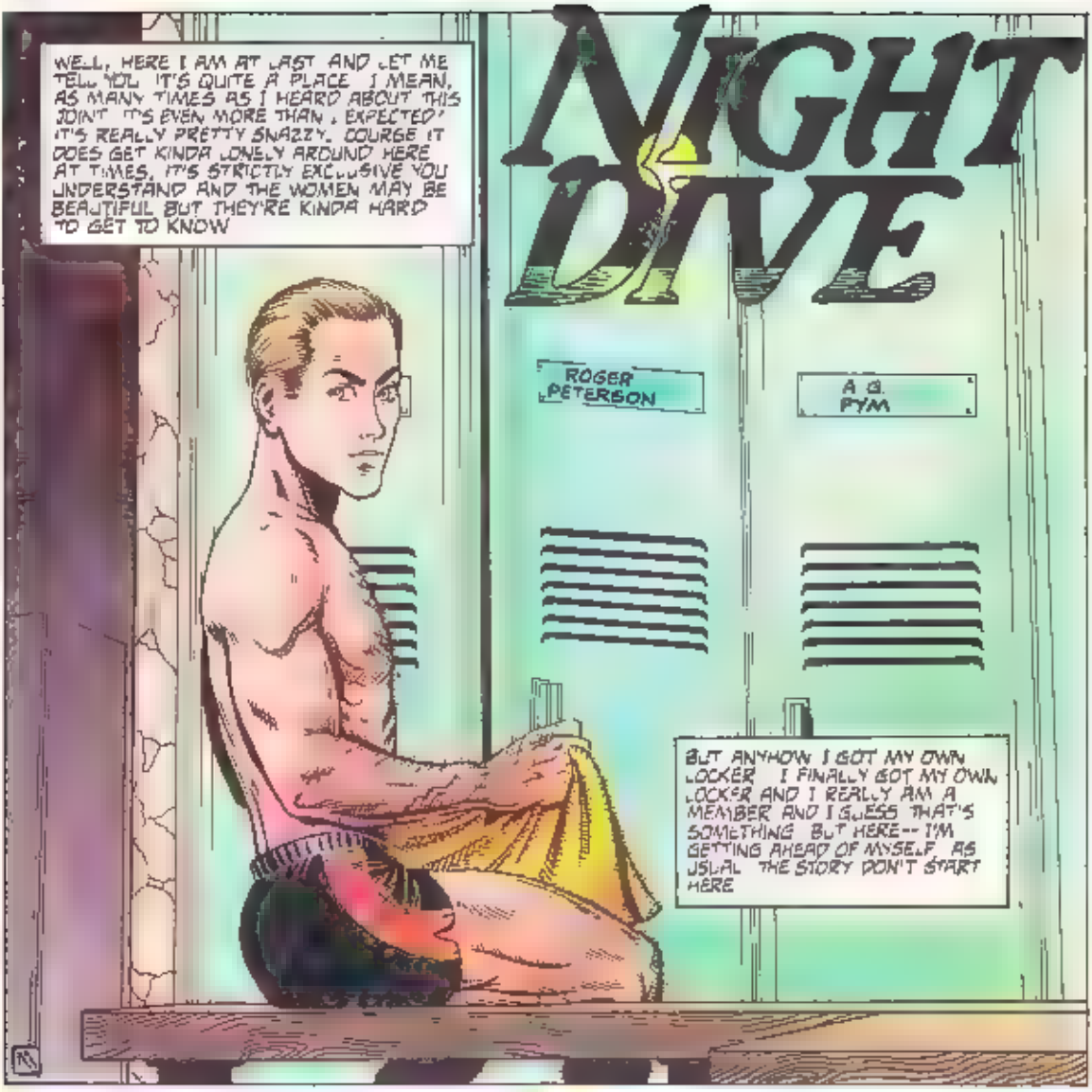
JUST ONCE YOU'D LIKE TO BE NOTICED FOR SOME THING BESIDES YOUR FUNNY EARS.. JUST ONCE YOU'D LIKE TO BE ON THE RECEIVING END OF A WARM, FEMININE SMILE...

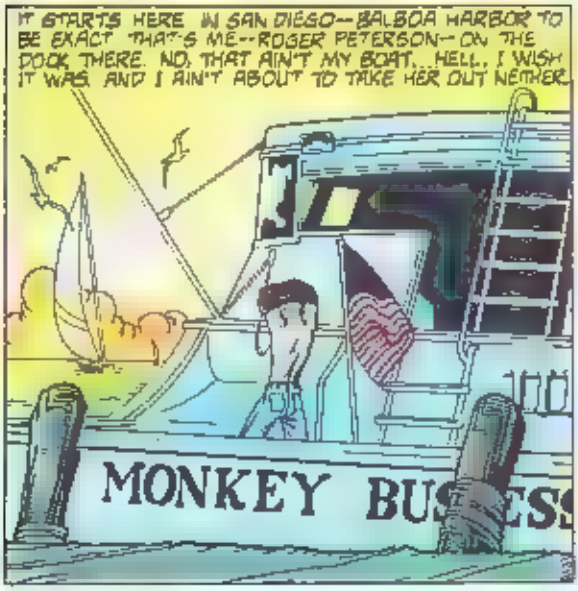
JUST ONE DRINK, THEN I'M GETTING OUT OF THIS HOLE
WHAT'S THIS - SOMEBODY LEFT A NEWSPAPER?

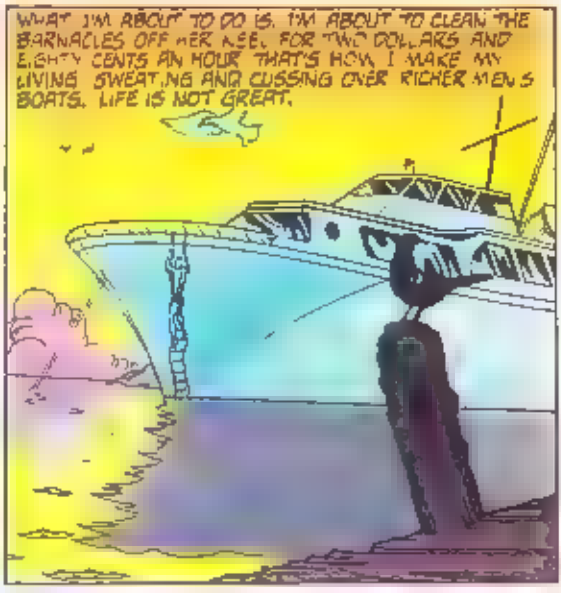

WHAT IS IT, MR SMITH--WHAT IS IT ABOUT THE TERRIBLE HEADLINES, THE PATHETIC PHOTO THAT GETS TO YOU? IS IT THAT YOU IDENTIFY IN SOME WAY WITH THE VICTIM?
MY GOD...


DOES IT REMIND YOU SOMEHOW OF THE SENSELESSNESS OF YOUR OWN LIFE?
MISTER? HEY - YOU ALL RIGHT?
MAN FOUND BRUTALLY MURDERED

NIGHT DIVE


WELL, HERE I AM AT LAST AND LET ME TELL YOU IT'S QUITE A PLACE I MEAN, AS MANY TIMES AS I HEARD ABOUT THIS JOINT IT'S EVEN MORE THAN I EXPECTED' IT'S REALLY PRETTY SNAZZY. COURSE IT DOES GET KINDA LONELY AROUND HERE AT TIMES, IT'S STRICTLY EXCLUSIVE YOU UNDERSTAND AND THE WOMEN MAY BE BEAUTIFUL BUT THEY'RE KINDA HARD TO GET TO KNOW
ROGER PETERSON
A G. PYM
BUT ANYHOW I GOT MY OWN LOCKER I FINALLY GOT MY OWN LOCKER AND I REALLY AM A MEMBER AND I GUESS THAT'S SOMETHING BUT HERE-- I'M GETTING AHEAD OF MYSELF AS USUAL THE STORY DON'T START HERE

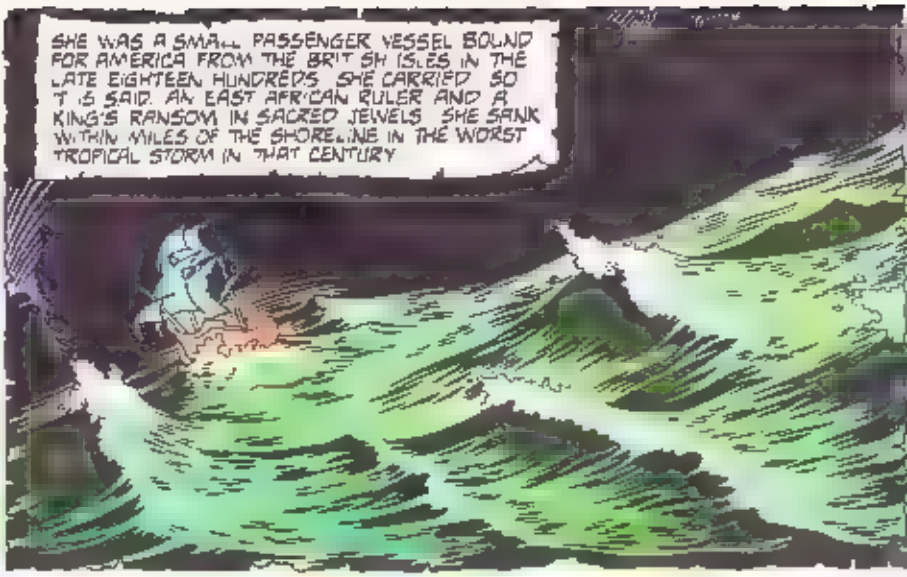

IT STARTS HERE IN SAN DIEGO--BALBOA HARBOR TO BE EXACT THAT'S ME--ROGER PETERSON--ON THE DOCK THERE. NO, THAT AIN'T MY BOAT. HELL, I WISH IT WAS. AND I AIN'T ABOUT TO TAKE HER OUT NEITHER.
MONKEY BUS


WHAT I'M ABOUT TO DO IS. I'M ABOUT TO CLEAN THE BARNACLES OFF HER KEEL FOR TWO DOLLARS AND EIGHTY CENTS AN HOUR THAT'S HOW I MAKE MY LIVING SWEATING AND CUSSING OVER RICHER MEN'S BOATS. LIFE IS NOT GREAT.

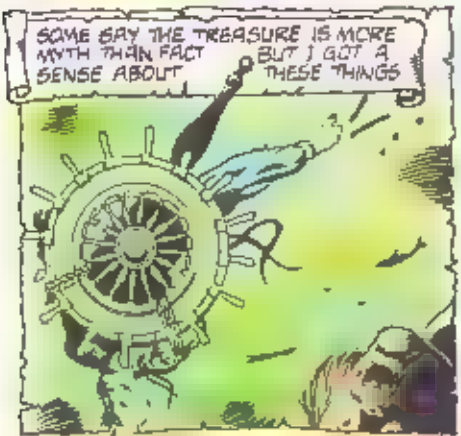
Story Bruce Jones Art and Colours Henry Mayo Letters: Carrie Spiegle

YEAH, THAT'S HOW I MAKE MY BREAD AND -BUTTER MONEY THE REAL MONEY-- THE FORTUNE I'M COUNTING ON--IS OUT THERE IN GLORIETTE BAY SOMEWHERE LYING ABOUT TEN OR TWELVE FATHOMS BELOW THE ROLLING PACIFIC. THE STAR OF INDIA

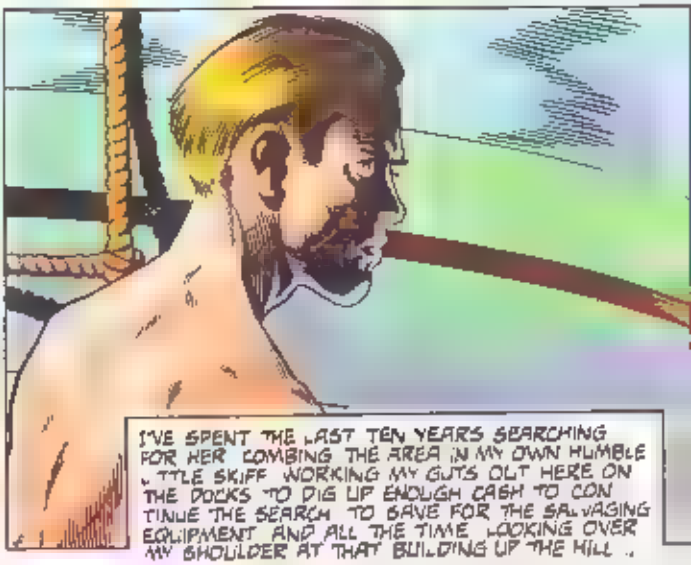
SHE WAS A SMALL PASSENGER VESSEL BOUND FOR AMERICA FROM THE BRITISH ISLES IN THE LATE EIGHTEEN HUNDREDS. SHE CARRIED SO IT IS SAID, AN EAST AFRICAN RULER AND A KING'S RANSOM IN SACRED JEWELS. SHE SANK WITHIN MILES OF THE SHORELINE IN THE WORST TROPICAL STORM IN THAT CENTURY



SOME SAY THE TREASURE IS MORE MYTH THAN FACT BUT I GOT A SENSE ABOUT THESE THINGS

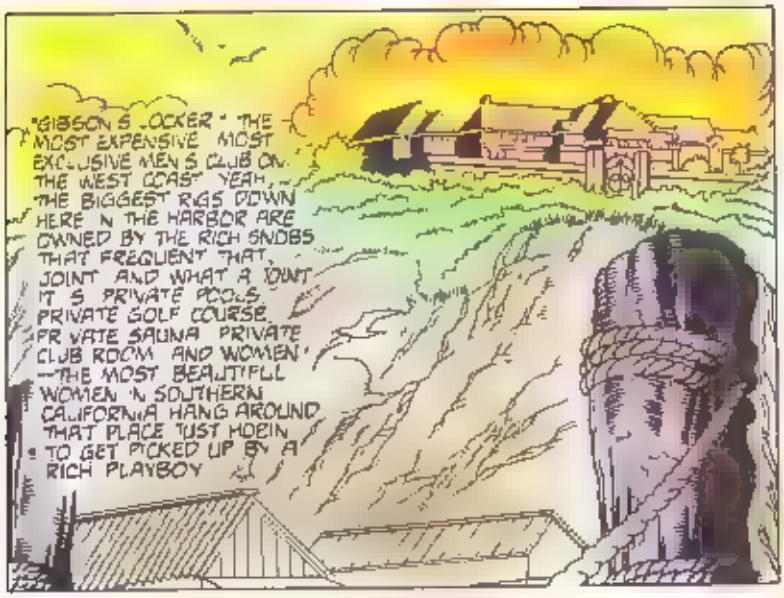


IT'S DOWN THERE ALL RIGHT ALL SPARKLING AND SHINY AND JUST WAITING FOR SOMEONE TO FIND HER AND PICK HER UP THAT SOMEONE'S GONNA BE ME



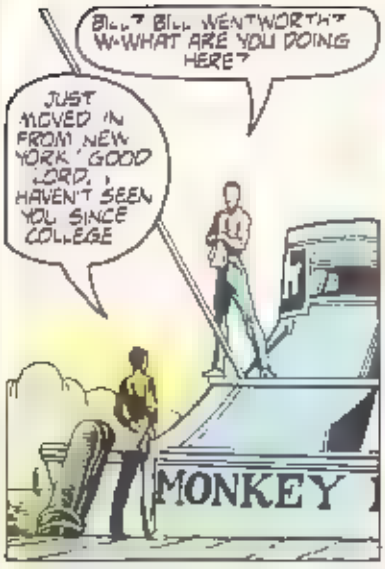
I'VE SPENT THE LAST TEN YEARS SEARCHING FOR HER COMBING THE AREA IN MY OWN HUMBLE LITTLE SKIFF WORKING MY GUTS OUT HERE ON THE DOCKS TO DIG UP ENOUGH CASH TO CONTINUE THE SEARCH TO SAVE FOR THE SALVAGING EQUIPMENT AND ALL THE TIME LOOKING OVER MY SHOULDER AT THAT BUILDING UP THE HILL..

"GIBSON'S LOCKER" THE MOST EXPENSIVE MOST EXCLUSIVE MEN'S CLUB ON THE WEST COAST. YEAH, THE BIGGEST RIGS DOWN HERE IN THE HARBOR ARE OWNED BY THE RICH SNOBS THAT FREQUENT THAT JOINT AND WHAT A JOINT IT'S PRIVATE POOLS PRIVATE GOLF COURSE PRIVATE SAUNA PRIVATE CLUB ROOM AND WOMEN' --THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WOMEN IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA HANG AROUND THAT PLACE JUST HOPIN TO GET PICKED UP BY A RICH PLAYBOY



ALL I EVER WANTED IN THIS LIFE TIME WAS MY OWN LOCKER WITH MY OWN NAME ON IT IN THAT VERY EXCLUSIVE CLUB. HELL I'D HAVE GIVEN MY LEFT ARM JUST TO SEE THE INSIDE OF THE PLACE BUT YA GOTTA BE A MEMBER..

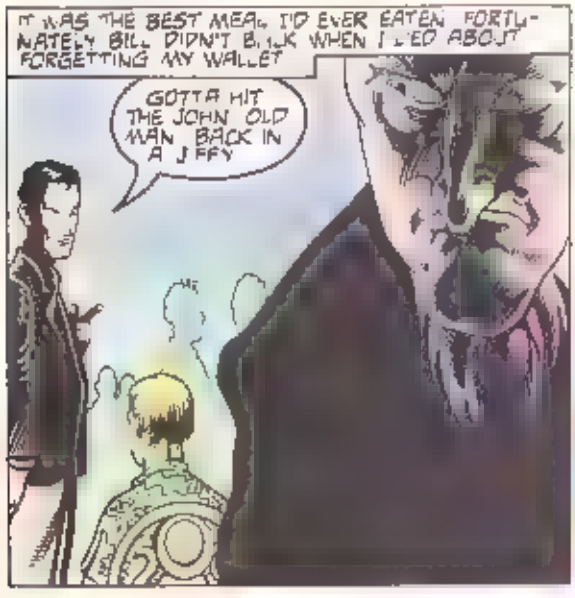
ROGER? NOT ROGER PETERSON! IT CAN'T BE!

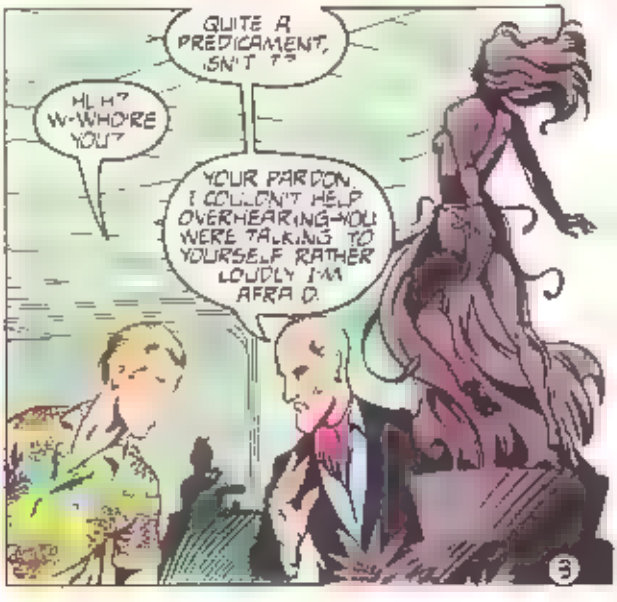


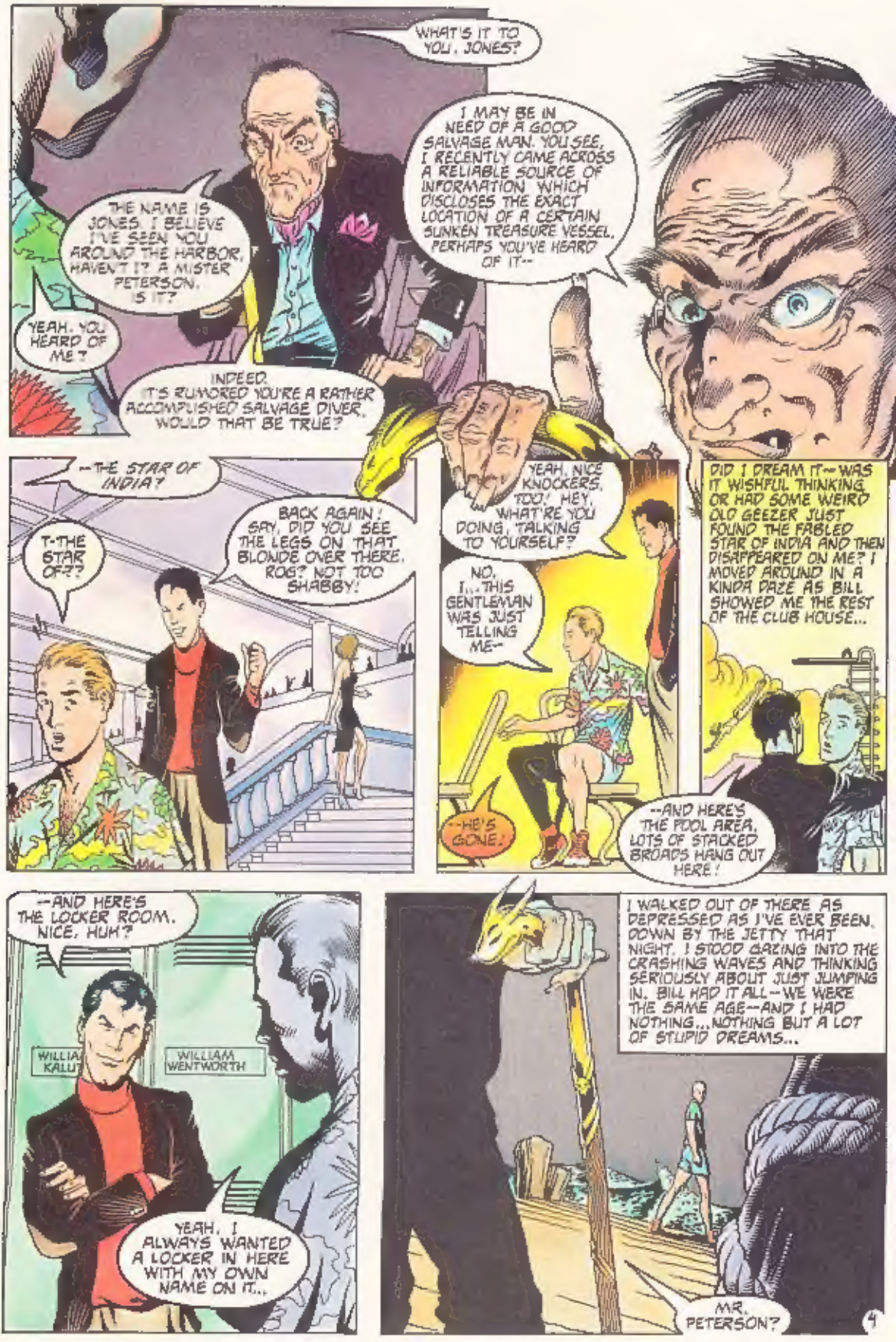
Y-YOU LOOK WELL BILL--I MEAN, YOU LOOK LIKE YOU'RE DOING WELL...
ME? WHAT ABOUT YOU? HEY I WISH I COULD AFFORD A YACHT THIS BIG. HOW LONG HAVE YOU HAD HER?

WE HAD BEEN CHILDHOOD FRIENDS. RIVALS, REALLY. BILL HAD ALWAYS ONE UP-PED ME IN EVERYTHING. FROM LETTERS IN TRACK TO THE PRETTIEST CAMPUS COED. IT LOOKED LIKE HE WAS STILL AT IT

THAT'S HOW I GOT IN OVER MY HEAD. I JUST COULDN'T TELL BILL THE TRUTH. THAT I WAS DEAD BROKE. HOW COULD I BEAR THE HUMILIATION AFTER ALL THESE YEARS? AND HOW COULD I PASS UP AN OPPORTUNITY LIKE THIS TO SEE THE INSIDE OF THAT FABLED CLUB?


IT WAS THE BEST MEAL I'D EVER EATEN. FORTUNATELY BILL DIDN'T BALK WHEN I CONFESSED ABOUT FORGETTING MY WALLET
GOTTA HIT THE JOHN. OLD MAN BACK IN A JIFFY


QUITE A PREDICAMENT, ISN'T IT?
HUH? W-WHO'RE YOU?
YOUR PARDON. I COULDN'T HELP OVERHEARING--YOU WERE TALKING TO YOURSELF RATHER LOUDLY I'M AFRAID.


WHAT'S IT TO YOU, JONES?
I MAY BE IN NEED OF A GOOD SALVAGE MAN. YOU SEE, I RECENTLY CAME ACROSS A RELIABLE SOURCE OF INFORMATION WHICH DISCLOSES THE EXACT LOCATION OF A CERTAIN SUNKEN TREASURE VESSEL. PERHAPS YOU'VE HEARD OF IT--
THE NAME IS JONES. I BELIEVE I'VE SEEN YOU AROUND THE HARBOR, HAVEN'T I? A MISTER PETERSON, IS IT?
YEAH. YOU HEARD OF ME?
INDEED. IT'S RUMORED YOU'RE A RATHER ACCOMPLISHED SALVAGE DIVER. WOULD THAT BE TRUE?
--THE STAR OF INDIA?
T-THE STAR OF?!?
BACK AGAIN! SAY, DID YOU SEE THE LEGS ON THAT BLONDE OVER THERE, ROG? NOT TOO SHABBY!
YEAH. NICE KNOCKERS, TOO! HEY, WHAT'RE YOU DOING, TALKING TO YOURSELF?
NO, I...THIS GENTLEMAN WAS JUST TELLING ME--
--HE'S GONE.
DID I DREAM IT--WAS IT WISHFUL THINKING, OR HAD SOME WEIRD OLD GEEZER JUST FOUND THE FABLED STAR OF INDIA AND THEN DISAPPEARED ON ME? I MOVED AROUND IN A KINDA DAZE AS BILL SHOWED ME THE REST OF THE CLUB HOUSE...
--AND HERE'S THE POOL AREA. LOTS OF STACKED BROADS HANG OUT HERE!
--AND HERE'S THE LOCKER ROOM. NICE, HUH?
WILLIAM KALU
WILLIAM WENTWORTH
YEAH. I ALWAYS WANTED A LOCKER IN HERE WITH MY OWN NAME ON IT...
I WALKED OUT OF THERE AS DEPRESSED AS I'VE EVER BEEN. DOWN BY THE JETTY THAT NIGHT, I STOOD GAZING INTO THE CRASHING WAVES AND THINKING SERIOUSLY ABOUT JUST JUMPING IN. BILL HAD IT ALL--WE WERE THE SAME AGE--AND I HAD NOTHING...NOTHING BUT A LOT OF STUPID DREAMS...
MR. PETERSON?

MR. JONES! WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU IN THE DINING ROOM?
FORGIVE ME. BUT ONE CANNOT BE TOO CAUTIOUS WHEN DISCUSSING THE LOCATION OF A SUNKEN TREASURE SHIP. DON'T YOU AGREE?

IT'S TRUE, THEN? YOU REALLY KNOW WHERE THE STAR OF INDIA LIES?
INDEED, MR. PETERSON. BUT HER SECRET WON'T KEEP FOREVER. WE MUST RETRIEVE HER PRECIOUS CARGO TONIGHT!
TONIGHT, IN THE DARK?

WHAT BETTER WAY TO DISGUISE OUR WORK? MY SHIP RESTS AT ANCHOR JUST OVER A MILE DUE SOUTH OF THIS POINT. ALL THE NECESSARY SALVAGING EQUIPMENT IS ABOARD. SHE LACKS ONLY A STRONG BACK TO WORK THE WINCHES AND MAKE US BOTH RICH MEN. DO WE HAVE AN AGREEMENT THEN, MR. PETERSON?
B-BUT THAT'S A BIG JOB FOR ONLY ONE DIVER!

I HAVE AN ASSISTANT TO HELP YOU. MEET ME THERE AT PRECISELY MIDNIGHT AND BY THIS TIME TOMORROW YOU WILL HAVE THAT PRIVATE LOCKER, MR. PETERSON!

BY THE TIME I REACHED THE OLD MAN'S BOAT, A STORM WAS KICKING UP...
AHOY THERE!
WELCOME ABOARD, MR. PETERSON!

I BELIEVE YOU KNOW MY ASSISTANT, MR. WENTWORTH...
BILL WENTWORTH! WHAT'S HE DOING HERE! HE'S ALREADY GOT MORE MONEY THAN HE KNOWS WHAT TO DO WITH!
I-IT ISN'T TRUE, ROGER...

PAMELA LEFT ME LAST WEEK--TOOK EVERYTHING! I-I'M BANKRUPT! THEY'RE THREATENING TO KICK ME OUT OF THE CLUB!
NOT TO WORRY MR. WENTWORTH. THE BOTH OF YOU WILL BE ENJOYING THE PRIVILEGES OF MEMBERSHIP IN NO TIME! YOUR GEAR, MR. PETERSON!

WE DIVIDE THE TREASURE THREE WAYS, IS THAT THE DEAL?
I BELIEVE THAT WILL BE MOST AMENABLE, CORRECT, MR. WENTWORTH?
YEAH, SURE, WHATEVER.

IT WAS BLACK AS PITCH IN THAT WATER. WE COULDN'T HAVE SEEN OUR HANDS BEFORE OUR FACES WITHOUT THE TORCHES...

I ALREADY KNEW WHAT I WAS GONNA DO EVEN BEFORE WE HIT THE WATER... BILL WENTWORTH HAD ONE-UPPED ME FOR THE LAST TIME. I COULD DEAL WITH THE WEIRD MR. JONES LATER...

THE SHARKS WERE ALREADY ATTRACTED BY THE LIGHT OF OUR TORCHES, A LITTLE BLOOD IN THE WATER JUST ICED THE CAKE...

AGH!

TROUBLE WAS, I DROPPED MY TORCH IN ALL THE EXCITEMENT. THE LAST THING I SAW WAS BILL'S STRUGGLING FORM BEING RIPPED APART BY THE MAKOS...THEN BLACKNESS CLOSED IN ALL AROUND ME...

IT'S EVERY DIVER'S WORST NIGHTMARE, TO BE TRAPPED BELOW THE SURFACE WITHOUT A LIGHT. AT THAT DEPTH YOU CAN'T TELL TOP FROM BOTTOM, EVEN THE BUBBLES FROM YOUR REGULATOR ARE NO GOOD 'CAUSE YOU CAN'T *SEE* THEM! I COULDA BEEN SWIMMIN' STRAIGHT INTO THE MUD!

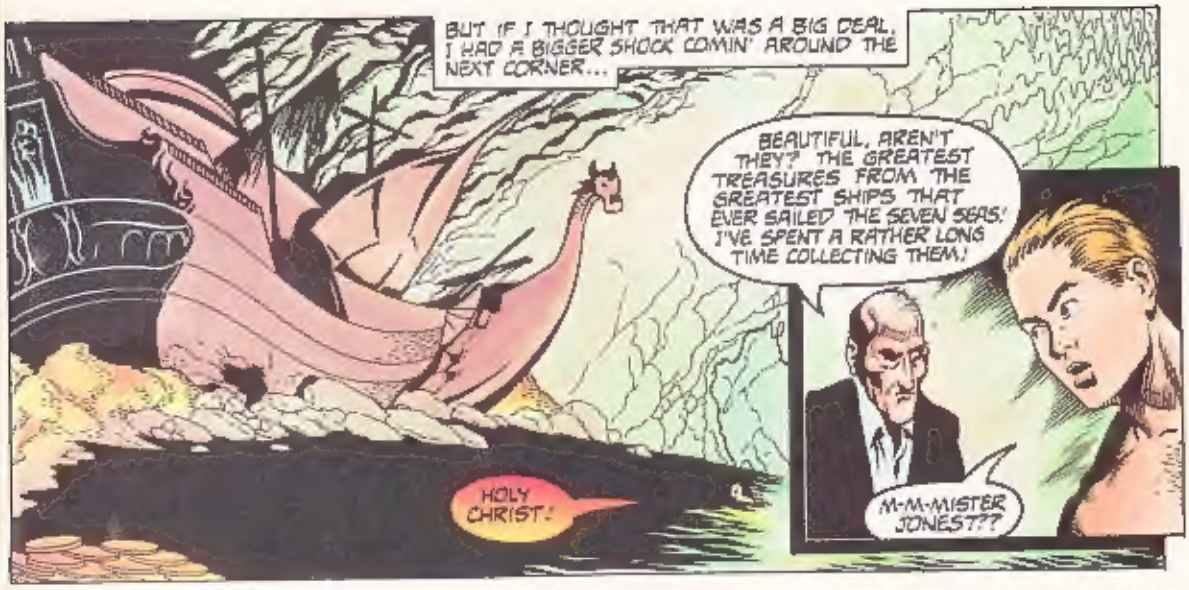
MY AIR HOSE BEGAN TO CONSTRICT. MY TANK WAS EMPTY! THAT'S WHEN I SAW THE LIGHT UP AHEAD...

A CAVE? BETTER MAKE FOR IT, NO AIR LEFT!

IT *WAS* A CAVE, AND THAT WASN'T EVEN THE BEST PART...

(GASP!) I-I'VE FOUND IT! THE STAR OF INDIA!

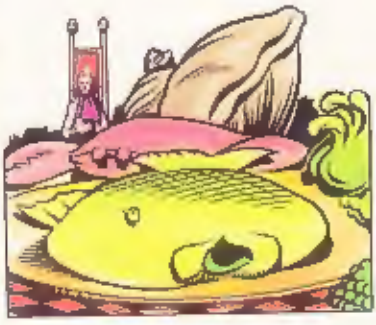
NO WONDER NO ONE COULD SPOT HER BEFORE --SHE WAS INSIDE THIS GROTTO!

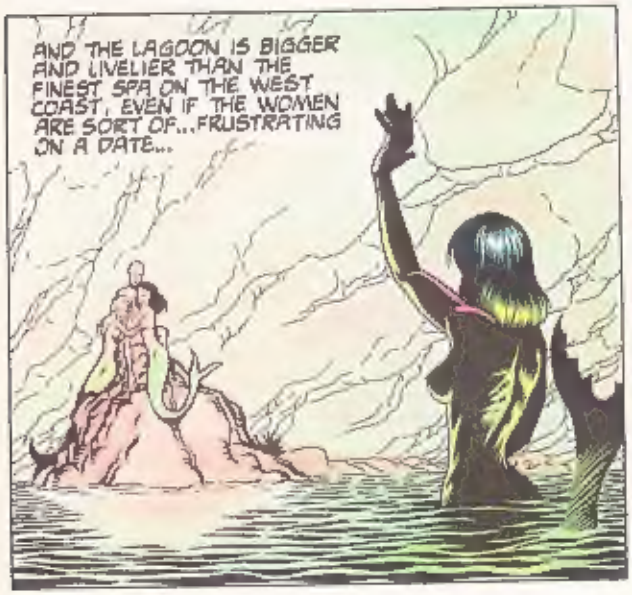
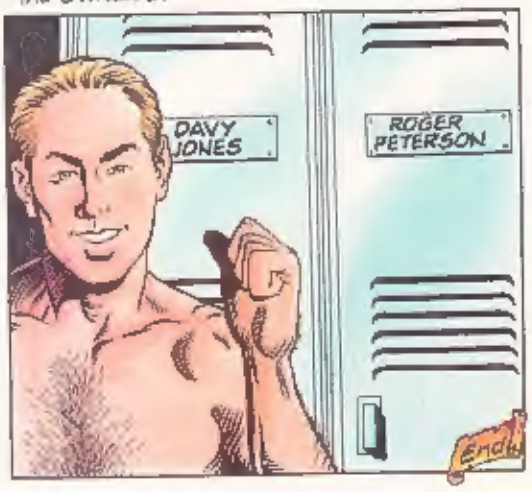

BUT IF I THOUGHT THAT WAS A BIG DEAL, I HAD A BIGGER SHOCK COMIN' AROUND THE NEXT CORNER...
BEAUTIFUL, AREN'T THEY? THE GREATEST TREASURES FROM THE GREATEST SHIPS THAT EVER SAILED THE SEVEN SEAS! I'VE SPENT A RATHER LONG TIME COLLECTING THEM!
HOLY CHRIST!
M-M-MISTER JONES?!?

I JUST KNOW YOU'LL ENJOY GUARDING THEM FOR ME WHILE I'M OUT DOING MY COLLECTING ALL THE OTHERS DID. FEEL FREE TO ROAM AMONGST THEM, THINK OF THEM AS YOUR OWN. IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO LEAVE, OF COURSE...

HEY, WAIT! HOW DID YOU--?
YOU'RE A FULL MEMBER, SO PLEASE ENJOY THE FACILITIES! I MUST LEAVE YOU NOW-- STILL A FEW THINGS LEFT ON THE TITANIC I WANT TO GET BEFORE THEY POKE AROUND THERE ANYMORE!

IT ISN'T A BAD LITTLE CLUB, I GUESS. THE DINING ROOM'S SPACIOUS AND AIRY AND THE CUTLERY IS THE FINEST 16TH CENTURY SILVER EVEN IF THE MENU IS ALWAYS SEAFOOD...




AND THE LAGOON IS BIGGER AND LIVELIER THAN THE FINEST SPA ON THE WEST COAST, EVEN IF THE WOMEN ARE SORT OF...FRUSTRATING ON A DATE...

I GET A LITTLE LONELY SOMETIMES WHEN MR. JONES AIN'T HERE TO TALK TO. BUT I GUESS HAVIN' MY OWN LOCKER SORTA MAKES UP FOR IT. THAT'S MINE THERE-- RIGHT NEXT TO THE OWNER'S!